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ABSTRACT

Papers in this collection were prepared for the annual meeting of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. This volume contains papers related to organizational effectiveness and future directions. Chapter 1, "Mission, Planning, and Organizational Change," contains: (1) "Revitalizing Mission: A Collaborative Model" (Stephany Schlacter and Kurt Schackmuth); (2) "Coping with Uncertainty: Five Steps toward Institutional Strength in the Twenty-First Century" (Jon E. Quistgaard, Joann Fredrickson, and Ivan Lee Weir); (3) "Accomplishing Change in a Decentralized Institution: Key Moments in Ohio University's Transition to a Learning-Centric University" (David Descutner and Stephen J. Kopp); (4) "What Changes When Everything Changes: One University's Processes for Unification" (Robert L. Funaro, Nancy McGee, and Jacqueline Taylor); and (5) "Self/Strategic Study Planning: A Unified, User-Friendly Model" (Richard W. Stroede). Chapter 2, "Quality Improvement in Higher Education," contains: (6) "Applying the Baldrige Criteria for Quality Improvement: Focus on Leadership" (Robert A. Sedlack, Julie A. Furst-Bowe, and Claudia Smith); (7) "Putting Total Quality Improvement Management to Work in a University Setting" (Allan M. Hoffman and Mary Pat Wohlford-Wessels); (8) "Planning and Performance: Getting Where You Need To Go Using Key Performance Indicators" (Rich Wagner, Mike White, and Dick Pooley); (9) "Using Dashboards To Navigate Institutional Destinations" (Laurie Adolph, Rassoul Dastmozd, Ron Serpliss, and Gail Spies); (10) "Alternative Road to 'Paradise': Growing toward AQIP" (Don Betz, Ed Cunliff, and Donna Guinn); (11) "Completing AQIP's Vital Focus Assessment: What We Learned" (Leonard G. Heldreth and Teresa Kynell); (12) "Restructured Expectations for Two Community Colleges Based on the AQIP Journey" (Robert Callaway, Marcia Ballinger, Jan Donely, and Ron

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A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement, 2003

Volume 2: Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

2003 Edition

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**A Collection of Papers on
Self-Study and Institutional Improvement**

2003

**Volume 2
Organizational Effectiveness
and Future Directions**

Prepared for the program of
The Higher Learning Commission
Restructured Expectations: Building New Partnerships for Learning
at the 108th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
April 13—16, 2003 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

**A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement
2003**

**Volume 2
Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions**

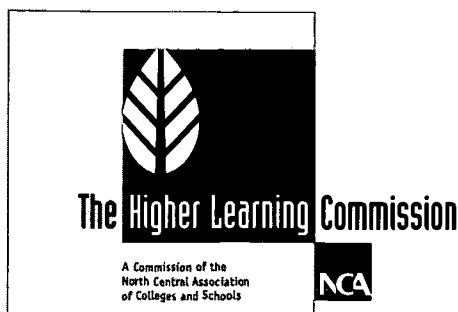
Susan E. Van Kollenburg, Editor

The papers included in this collection offer the viewpoints of their authors. The Commission highly recommends them for study and for the advice they contain, but none represent official Commission directions, rules, or policies.

This publication is part of a set of four volumes:

- Volume 1: Establishing and Sustaining Effective Connections**
- Building New Partnerships for Learning
 - State, Regional, and National Initiatives
- Volume 2: Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions**
- Mission, Planning, and Organizational Change
 - Quality Improvement in Higher Education
 - Using New Technology to Enhance Student Learning
 - Effective Learning Environments
- Volume 3: Promoting Student Learning and Effective Teaching**
- Developing and Sustaining a Culture of Assessment
 - Assessment Processes
 - Assessment Tools and Measures
 - General Education: Assessing Outcomes, Reforming Programs
 - Assessing and Supporting Effective Teaching
- Volume 4: The Self-Study Process for Commission Evaluation**
- Self-Study and Commission Evaluation: Coordinating the Self-Study
 - Self-Study and Commission Evaluation: Practical Advice
 - From the Eligibility Process through Initial Evaluation

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A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement
Volume 2: Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

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Foreword

It can be argued that the word “partnership” should be used cautiously and with care. After all, it does have a specific legal meaning about a shared, contractual business venture. The theme of this 108th Annual Meeting program was chosen with a much broader appreciation for the term: through partnerships “partners” share a common activity or interest. In fact, this *Collection of Papers* is testimony that both types of partnerships are growing in importance to our membership.

We claimed in the 1990s that higher education was undergoing a major transformation. Technology fueled much of the change. So also did the changing demographics of our students. Today finances have come to be another very significant driver for change. Effective learning environments demand more and more use of technology; services to diverse students require a richer array of programs and support services; at the same time funds from states dwindle and investment portfolios fail to perform. If higher education is going to meet growing demands, it inevitably must turn to new and different organizations to help share the design, support, and costs. New business partnerships, some among colleges and universities but many with private corporations, come into play. These are, in fact, partnerships in the legal, contractual understanding of the word. We need to know more about these, to identify what the appropriate quality assurance interests might be in them, and to disseminate best practices in them. Several of the papers presented in this *Collection of Papers* give us significant help in all these matters.

We have an even larger growth of partnerships that emerge from sharing of common interests. How do colleges and universities work together and with the K-12 sector to create effective educational pathways for students? How do groups of institutions create ways to share the endeavors of creating effective e-Learning courses and programs? What issues must be solved for two or more colleges to create a shared degree or a shared set of student services? These types of partnerships figure prominently in many papers in these volumes.

Accreditation is really a tremendous exercise in creating partnerships as well. Within any given college, the success of a self-study process engages the Commission, the self-study team, and all the constituents of that college. The Commission’s peer review processes depend on the willingness of its members to share the talents of site visitors and decision-makers. The Commission strives to build and maintain good relationships with state and federal governments also concerned about the quality of colleges and universities. Several of the papers in these volumes speak to these partnerships.

A considerable number of papers focus on two major Commission projects involving partnering with affiliated institutions. AQIP constitutes the most path-breaking experiment in recasting accrediting relationships, relationships of institutions to the Commission and institutions to each other. From these essays we learn about the power of this new approach. Effective and meaningful assessment of student learning still stands as an unmet goal of many colleges. These essays are the richest collection to date of accounts of the successful efforts of some institutions to create a new culture supportive of assessment.

Last, but not least, with the adoption this February of the new Criteria for Accreditation, the Board of Trustees not only integrated institutional and business partnerships into accreditation standards but also challenged its affiliated organizations to focus on the future, on their support for learning, on their connectedness, and on their attention to their own distinctiveness. Not many papers in this volume speak to directly to this new partnership meant to “serve the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning.” But discussion about it will be central to the Annual Meeting itself and the fruits of the new partnership inevitably will fill pages of future editions of the *Collection of Papers*.

Steven D. Crow
Executive Director

March 1, 2003

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Preface

On behalf of the Commission, I am pleased to present the 2003 edition of the Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement. Now in its nineteenth year, the Collection of Papers has moved beyond a supplement to the Meeting presentations to be a remarkable resource throughout the year for all who are interested in issues of higher education quality. We are grateful to our speakers for their generous contributions to the work of the Commission through these papers as well as through their presentations at the Annual Meeting.

With this edition, the Collection of Papers moves into a new phase of publication. The contributions of our speakers have grown in both number and substance. Topics once addressed in two or three papers, are now featured in twenty or more. It is no longer practical or useful to publish these papers in a single volume. Therefore, this Collection is presented as follows:

Volume 1. Establishing and Sustaining Effective Connections flows from the theme of this year's meeting, providing a wide variety of examples of new partnerships being forged by higher learning organizations and highlighting some state, regional, and national initiatives.

Volume 2. Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions focuses on the relationships among mission, planning, and organizational change; quality improvement in higher education, including a number of papers from institutions participating in the Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Project; the various challenges and opportunities offered by technology; and the role of effective learning environments in achieving institutional goals.

Volume 3. Promoting Student Learning and Effective Teaching features three chapters on the role of assessment in the improvement of student learning; a fourth chapter is devoted to assessing and reforming general education; the fifth chapter focuses on assessing and supporting effective teaching. For the fourteen years of the Commission's Assessment Initiative, the Collection of Papers has highlighted institutional efforts to assess student academic achievement. It is important to note that discussions of assessment efforts are not limited to this volume, but appear in numerous papers throughout the four volumes.

Volume 4. The Self-Study Process for Commission Evaluation, offers useful advice on organizing and conducting self-study and undergoing a team visit based on actual experience; it includes one case study on seeking and attaining initial status with the Commission.

Producing a book of this size in five weeks requires significant team effort. Special thanks are given to the following individuals who made the 2003 Collection possible: Larissa Kessler, for her help in processing initial submissions and preparing files; Sybil Sosin, for her valuable editorial assistance; Gerald Van Kollenburg, for his extraordinary assistance with the layout, particularly the charts and graphics; Kathleen Herring, for the beautiful cover designs; and Aaron Marsh of Honi Graphics, for always getting the book printed in time for the Meeting.

The Commission invites your comments about the Collection of Papers and welcomes your suggestions for future topics for the Annual Meeting program. I hope that you will consider participation as a speaker at a future Meeting. The strength of the Annual Meeting lies in the willingness of our institutions to share their experiences with others. I look forward to seeing you in at the Meeting.

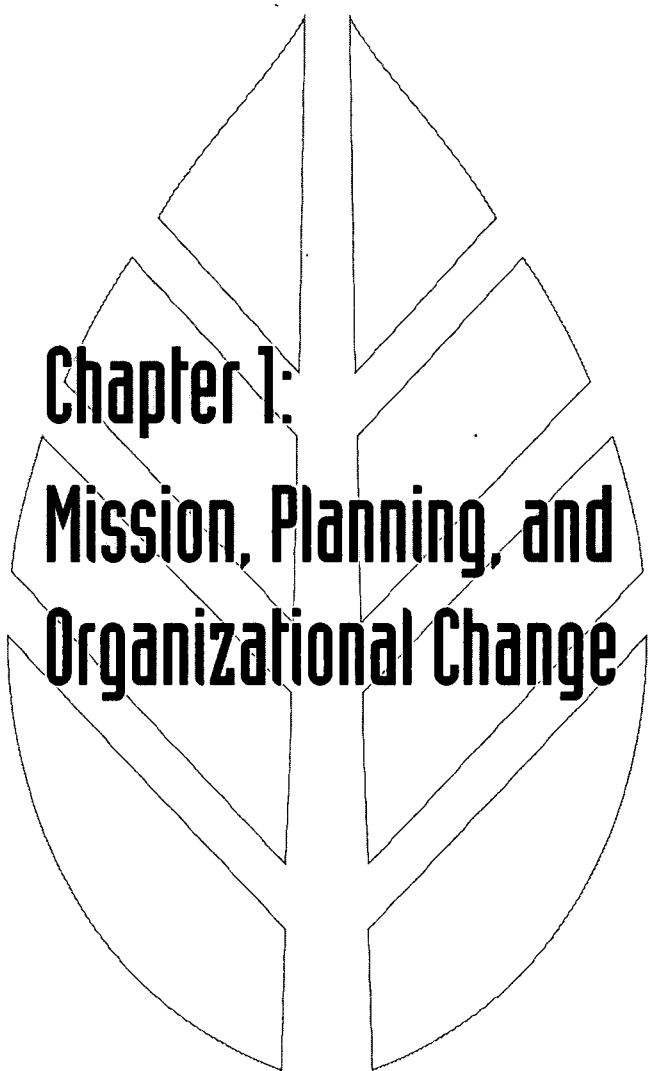
Susan E. Van Kollenburg
Editor
Associate Director for Programs, Publications,
and Member Services

March 1, 2003

Ed. note: The name of the Commission was changed from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education to The Higher Learning Commission effective January 1, 2001. In their papers, authors may have referred to this organization as the North Central Association, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, or The Higher Learning Commission. Information about the name change is available on the Commission's web site: www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org.

A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement, 2003

Volume 2: Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions



Chapter 1: Mission, Planning, and Organizational Change



The Higher Learning Commission

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Restructured Expectations: Building New Partnerships for Learning

**Program of
The Higher Learning Commission**

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108th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association

April 13 — 16, 2003 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

Revitalizing Mission: A Collaborative Model

Stephany Schlachter and Kurt Schackmuth

Lewis University: An Introduction

Located thirty-five minutes southwest of Chicago, Lewis University is a comprehensive Catholic university. The traditions of liberal learning and preparation for professional life give the university its educational identity and mission focus.

Now the twelfth largest among more than sixty private colleges and universities in the state of Illinois, Lewis has grown from a small aeronautical technical school for boys into a dynamic, coeducational, comprehensive Catholic university with a richly diverse student body, including traditional-aged students as well as adults of all ages. Classes are held at the main campus in Romeoville; at off-campus centers in Tinley Park, Oak Brook, Hickory Hills, and Schaumburg; and at sites throughout the Chicagoland area.

Inspired by its Catholic and Lasallian heritage, Lewis University offers a values-centered curriculum, rich in the mission values of knowledge, fidelity, wisdom, and justice, and guided by the spirit of association, which fosters community in all teaching, learning, and service. Lewis provides its more than 4,400 students with programs for a liberal and professional education based on the interaction of knowledge and fidelity in the search for truth.

The Mission Project

In the early 1990s, Lewis University embarked upon a comprehensive, university-wide institutional mission renewal project, followed by initiatives to operationalize and integrate the revitalized mission throughout all aspects of university life, particularly through strategic planning.

The impetus for significant mission renewal activities comes from the Lewis University mission itself, which instructs the university to “plan creatively for education that meets the needs of a changing pluralistic society while maintaining faithfulness to its Catholic and Lasallian heritage,” and from a 1990 board of trustees directive that was an outcome of a long-range planning committee workshop. The resulting two-year mission project utilized a research approach to provide rigor and objectivity to the process and to promote a high level of involvement by the university community.

The project included several major components:

- An extensive literature review and hermeneutical document analysis
- Interviews of a sample of each of the university’s constituencies, including trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni
- Data collection tools in the form of interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and written responses

Multiple drafts of the mission statement were refined through an extensive university-wide dialogue process that included convocation and board of trustee presentations, interviews, group gatherings, and administrative reviews. The revised mission was enthusiastically approved by the board of trustees in March 1994.

The mission project was valued as both a product and a process. The renewed mission provides a strengthened foundation to build upon as the university develops in the new century. The revision process demonstrated the importance of university-wide participation and supported the high-quality outcome that could be achieved by virtue of the rich and diverse expressions of information incorporated in preparing the document.

The New Mission Statement

The current mission preserves and honors many elements of its predecessor. The introduction that accompanies the mission statement title clearly states that the university is “faithful to the Lasallian Heritage in Catholic Higher Education.” A preamble section includes a summary of the key values and an explanation of their relationship to each other.

The mission statement follows:

Lewis University, guided by its Catholic and Lasallian heritage, provides programs for a liberal and professional education grounded in the interaction of knowledge and fidelity in the search for truth.

Lewis promotes the development of the complete person through the pursuit of wisdom and justice. Fundamental to its Mission is the spirit of association which develops community in all teaching, learning and service.

The entire mission document also refers to the heritage of the institution as university, Lasallian and Catholic; a definition and description of each of the five values of knowledge, fidelity, wisdom, justice, and association; and a current description of the university.

Implementing the Mission

Numerous efforts have taken place to implement the new mission statement, including the following processes, systems, and structures.

- The establishment of an office of mission and planning with three full-time staff members
- The creation of the mission and heritage council, which assists in implementing mission-related initiatives university-wide
- A pre-employment mission interview of each new employee
- An extensive mission orientation workshop and commissioning service for new employees designed to build community, expand the new employee's understanding and application of mission to his or her role, and welcome and celebrate the entry of each new employee into the mission of the university
- Mission activities for students supported through retreats, volunteerism, and special programming such as founders week and diversity week
- Faculty and staff participation in additional development activities such as a "hiring for mission" workshop for hiring managers and annual fall and spring mission-theme convocations in which external speakers address the university community on mission-related topics
- A mission-based Lasallian commencement address presented by a graduating senior at each semi-annual commencement ceremony
- Mission in the curriculum, which is addressed through numerous planning and assessment activities
- Several mission-based awards and honors presented to students, staff, and faculty on a yearly basis

The Role of Strategic Planning

One of the most significant methods of integrating mission into all aspects of the university is through planning initiatives derived from the university strategic plan approved by the board of trustees in March 1996. The university mission is the foundation for all planning initiatives. Planning is the primary and most important means by which the university systematically and comprehensively identifies, implements, and evaluates its mission goals. The strong linkage between mission and planning has been present from the beginning of the mission project and continues in tandem through the efforts of the office of mission and planning.

The fundamental structure in university planning is the university planning council (UPC), chaired by the president and including administrative, faculty, staff, and student members. In light of the mission revision, one of the initial tasks of the UPC was to discuss the mission as it relates to planning. The council then created a series of mission-centered goals to more concretely articulate the purposes of the mission.

This 1996 strategic plan, "A Vision for the Future," was brought to fruition in 2000, and the university is currently implementing the fifty-three initiatives of our second strategic plan, "Vision 2006: Learning, Mission and Leadership," which continues to address numerous externally and internally focused mission-related initiatives, building upon the strong foundation provided by the first strategic plan.

In summary, the strengths of the university in regard to mission stem from the articulation of a revised mission reflective of all institutional constituencies—a mission that builds upon the university heritage and clarifies its values and goals. The effectiveness

of the mission is enhanced by the creation of mission and planning-related positions; a mission focus in the areas of hiring and employee orientation; numerous activities for students, faculty, and staff to promote the mission; the utilization of mission as a framework for curriculum assessment; and the integration of the mission into all areas of the university through mission-based strategic planning.

Continuing mission challenges include the further development of mission strategies, processes, and structures in the areas of planning; curriculum development and evaluation; student, staff, and faculty development; and mission evaluation. The university is clearly strengthened in the area of mission as a result of significant university-wide collaboration in mission renewal and the subsequent collaborative implementation and planning activities that operationalize mission.

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Coping with Uncertainty: Five Steps Toward Institutional Strength In the Twenty-First Century

Jon E. Quistgaard, Joann Fredrickson, and Ivan Lee Weir

Background

Like many institutions of higher education in the last decade of the twentieth century, Bemidji State University intentionally enlarged the scope of its outreach to address the needs of a broader constituency. With an enrollment of 5,000 students, we offer more than fifty majors through twenty-six disciplines that meet or exceed national standards in their fields. Most students come from northern Minnesota; however, a substantial number originate from thirty-eight states and more than forty other countries. Although the university has a carrying capacity in excess of 5,500 students, the institution was 10 percent underenrolled, and its facilities were underutilized for much of the 1990s. This was a matter of concern during a period of declining state budget revenues, increasing accountability, and adjustment to new system merger.

Added to the changing external environmental challenges was North Central Association of Colleges and Schools' introduction of a requirement for institution-wide student learning outcomes assessment together with a concurrent demonstration of patterns of evidence. Bemidji State University had received focused visits as a result of the two previous ten-year comprehensive self-study reviews. The university's ability to accomplish meaningful and sustained strategic planning was a major concern.

Although new at the time, the North Central Association had indicated that an institution could propose to fulfill its comprehensive self-study evaluation process by using an unconventional approach. Because of the issues raised by previous visitation teams regarding strategic planning efforts, Bemidji State University proposed an alternative approach focused on the creation of a meaningful and sustainable planning process and outcomes, which we called the *Experimental Planning Initiative*. Our proposal was accepted by the North Central Association and thus began an accreditation renewal process that resulted in a redesign of the university's decision-making processes, planning, and policy implementation (for details, see Bemidji State University, *Self-Study Report 2000*; *Directional Statement Report 2000*; and *Experimental Planning Initiative 2000*; as well as the Monitoring Report 2002, available in the 2003 Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting resource room).

A New Philosophy for Planning

Bemidji State University, like many institutions of higher education, had long been involved in planning processes that can be best characterized as "planning-to-plan". That is, planning approaches would be proposed, consultation would occur, and implementation would be initiated, but the cumbersomeness of the processes would overwhelm the development of outcomes. In effect, the process would become the outcome.

The campus design team, in consultation with the campus community was charged with the development of the *experimental planning initiative*. The assumptions that shaped and guided the experimental planning initiative were needs to

1. Respect the institution's history of collective bargaining, thus preserving our commitment to shared governance and collaboration
2. Enhance opportunities for involvement for all stakeholders in the development of the experimental planning initiative
3. Provide for meaningful direction to institutional decision making, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to anticipate and enable rapid response to changes in the internal and external operating environments
4. Make decisions based on shared vision, mission, and goals

5. Link planning priorities with the allocation and reallocation of resources
6. Develop a clear framework for accountability

Based on the six internal planning assumptions, three planning goals were identified:

1. Clarify and reaffirm the primacy of the academic mission, setting clear institutional priorities and demonstrating that those priorities govern decisions as an institution committed above all to learning.
2. Simplify procedures and institutional processes at every level while preserving and enhancing meaningful communication and consultation, and the capacity for timely decision making.
3. Reduce the number of campus-wide committees while creating an integrative structure focused on planning, policy, and innovation.

Five Steps Toward Strengthening the Institution

Public higher education institutions across the nation have anticipated and responded to calls for reforms for more than a decade. In past decades regional colleges and universities were viewed by the public as gatekeepers to knowledge and higher learning. With the advent of high-speed knowledge transfer and global communications systems and with the declining cost of computers and increased access to the immense information resources of Internet, colleges and universities modified their roles in knowledge dissemination and are viewed as one of several providers of knowledge and information. As learning becomes increasingly interactive in the digital age, the learner is expected to assume more responsibility for his or her education, and faculty members are called upon to participate as facilitators, navigators, and guides in the learning process. Concurrently, costs associated with human resources have increased dramatically. *Accountability, productivity, efficiency, and cost effectiveness* are now terms routinely used in educational circles. Although still important, no longer is knowledge for the sake of knowledge a sufficient reason for most students to pursue education. Rather, career preparation, acquisition of high-level skills, and future earning potential are more likely to motivate individuals to seek a higher education.

Finding itself at this juncture of educational history, Bemidji State University has sought to manage its external contingencies—that is, a declining state resource base; increasing calls for accountability, rising operational costs, aging of the professorate, and increasing enrollments—by approaching the future based on strategic thinking. Thus, the university has used a series of strategic events (outlined below as five steps toward institutional strength) to foster institutional strengthening needed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The five steps are

1. Implementing the *experimental planning initiative*
2. Creating and sustaining a culture of continuous evaluation
3. Incorporating self-study recommendations
4. Developing a strategic plan
5. Realigning expectations to the new environment

☐ Step One: Implementation

The experimental planning initiative was in its skeletal stage in 2000. Although a committee structure and reorganization of information flow was set forth in the model, it had not matured sufficiently to become a working protocol by the time of the North Central site visit. However, during the past two years, the planning structure has been fully implemented, and active participation occurs through six planning committees composed of faculty, staff, students, and administration. The planning committees are academic affairs, budget and resource allocation, computing, technology and learning resources, outreach and partnerships, recruitment and retention, and student and university services (details on composition and charges are in the resource documents). Administrators and faculty/staff co-chairs of each of the planning committees comprise the university council (planning). The university council is responsible for proposing planning initiatives to the president's executive council. The university council is also charged with the responsibility of reviewing progress toward fulfilling the university's five-year goal in relationship to the strategic plan by using a framework for accountability.

The executive council (policy) consists of the president, vice presidents, and the deans. Their function is to advise the president on issues related to university policy. (see Monitoring Report 2002 for details). The executive council may also initiate policy recommendations for review by the planning committees and the university council.

The experimental planning initiative also created a third council, the innovations council. Its purpose is to keep the university positioned as an educational innovator and locus of creativity and excitement. The innovations council is an external source of new ideas and experimentation. The president serves as the chair of the innovations council, and its membership is drawn from for-profit, non-profit, and governmental communities.

☐ Step Two: Continuous Evaluation

Because of the university's incomplete experience with planning, the Higher Learning Commission requested a monitoring report. The purpose of the monitoring report was to assure the university and the Higher Learning Commission that the institution had successfully transitioned from a "planning to plan" approach to a structure and process that yielded meaningful and sustainable planning. Preparation of the monitoring report afforded the university an opportunity to reevaluate its progress and expected outcomes associated with planning and assessment. (see Monitoring Report 2002).

The university continues to realize considerable progress in nurturing a culture of assessment and planning. For example, all academic and service departments use assessment results to enhance student learning, growth, and development. In addition, all academic programs and services are required to engage in five-year external review processes that include reference to national benchmarks. Through the planning structure (planning committees, university council, and president's executive council), this information is used to inform decision making at the department, college, and university levels.

The academic affairs committee is responsible for reviewing external consultant five-year review reports in a given year from an institutional perspective. By identifying recurring themes or messages, the appropriate planning committees recommend strategies to further strengthen student learning achievement to the university council and in turn to the executive council.

☐ Step Three: Incorporation of Change Through Self-Study

In addition to the recommendations regarding enhancements to assessment and planning, the 2000 site visit team also encouraged the university to strengthen communication efforts regarding how budget decision making is linked to university priorities. The university budget and resource allocations committee has worked with the vice president for finance and administration and the new president to involve the campus community in resource allocation decision making. After learning what budget information the campus community would like to receive and how they would like to be involved in the process, the president hosts regular budget review forums and provides updates through the President's Newsletter and other communications to the campus community.

Another recommendation advanced by the visitation team was to simplify approaches for planning. Previous directional statements, goals, organizational principles, and similar planning statements were formulated into a single and concise shared five-year goal that supports the university's vision and mission. Measurable priorities contained within the statement include commitments to liberal education integrated with professional career programs, lifelong learning, student centeredness, educational excellence, and leadership in a global society.

☐ Step Four: Development of a Strategic Plan

Building on planning that had already occurred across the campus, a formal shared strategic plan has been developed. The 2002–2007 university strategic plan posits four major strategies to achieve growth in enrollment, our reputation as an institution of choice, and our ability to diversify our resources. The four strategies are to

1. Maintain, expand, and diversify resources to enhance educational excellence
2. Support excellence in learning programs and services
3. Align resources with priorities identified in the five-year goal
4. Enhance institutional decision making and shared governance

Within each of the four major strategies are a number of initiatives and action steps (see University Plan).

☐ Step Five: Realigning Expectations

In order to operationalize the strategic plan, an annual work plan has been developed. The work plan consists of the specific action steps needed to accomplish the strategic plan. In addition, a framework for accountability has been created to enable the

institution to evaluate its progress in realizing the university's goal. The framework for accountability consists of evaluating the effect of the university strategies by developing multiple specific indicators to form composite indicators for each. For example, the strategy of supporting excellence in learning programs and services will involve a composite measure of student engagement. The specific indicators used to measure student engagement will consist of number of hours spent in enrichment activities and number of hours spent on homework, class presentations, and papers and projects. The measurement of performance in accomplishing this strategy will enable the university to evaluate its success and adjust its priorities accordingly.

Coping with Uncertainty

The strategic plan has been designed to enable the university to accomplish its five-year goal. We have anticipated that factors such as budget constraints, increased competition for students, demographic shifts, increased global interdependence, and emerging technologies will continue to characterize the external environment. Internal challenges will include how to address increased enrollments during a time of declining state resources; hiring and retaining qualified faculty, staff, and administration; flexibility within the six collective bargaining agreements; and costs associated with technology and infrastructure development. We also are challenged with the expectation that alternative solutions to our present living and learning environments will be identified to better accommodate changing lifestyles.

The experimental approach to planning and assessment was initiated with the understanding that as a campus community we needed to fully address the realities of the internal and external environments as described above. Through open and forthright dialogue regarding challenges to the university, the experimental planning initiative was developed. Central to the development of a culture for planning and assessment was the opportunity for the campus community to share its hopes, concerns, and aspirations. The campus has been able to move beyond the climate of "planning to plan" into a shared approach toward shaping our future. A strength of the process is that it is characterized by open communication and vigorous debate. The development of the five-year goal, strategic plan, work plan, and framework for accountability are the result of campus self-determination to move beyond an approach that places the primary emphasis on parochial interests. Yet, as a complex organization, we recognize that sustaining a culture is always a work in progress.

Readers are invited to examine Bemidji State University's 2000 *Self-Study Report*, *Self-Study Executive Summary*, *Experimental Planning Initiative*, *Directional Statement Report*, the 2002 *Monitoring Report*, and the *University Plan*. Review copies of these documents are available in the Higher Learning Commission reference room. Limited copies of these documents are available for distribution. If interested, please call 218-755-3999, or e-mail srarkin@bemidjistate.edu.

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Accomplishing Change in a Decentralized Institution: Key Moments in Ohio University's Transition to a Learning-Centric University

David Descutner and Stephen J. Kopp

Introduction

Over the last four years Ohio University has been engaged in a multi-faceted effort to transform itself into an institution where learning is the hallmark of its identity. Teaching, research, and service remain fundamental priorities, but how each contributes to learning is now of preeminent concern. Central to this ongoing transformation, which is complicated by the decentralized character of the institution, is building internal and external partnerships; reframing traditional roles and expectations of faculty, administration, staff, and students; redefining what constitutes ideal environments for learning; renewing institutional commitment to multiple forms and levels of assessment; and rethinking how resources, including instructional technology, can be redirected to realize the vision of a learning-centric university. Our paper will identify and briefly explicate the four key moments in this process of transformation and, by so doing, offer exemplars that other institutions with similar aspirations should find instructive.

First Moment: General Education Reform

A committee of faculty and administrators was charged in 1998 with the task of comprehensively evaluating the general education program, which had not been reviewed for twenty years. From that two-year inquiry emerged a plan for a new program that is now formally approved and will take effect in fall 2005. The rationale for the new program is that general education should furnish a foundation for living in a world of growing complexity and accelerated change where essential fluencies, adaptability, higher-order thinking, and familiarity with diverse bodies of knowledge and multiple perspectives will have more enduring value than specialized training or content mastery, both of which quickly become obsolete.

The first principle of the new program mandates that general education requirements be intertwined with the major, distributed over a student's four years rather than being completed, as now, largely within the first year, and intentionally linked to co-curricular experiences in the residence halls, campus activities and organizations, and community work and service. Threading general education through the curriculum and co-curriculum and across the full span of students' time on campus affirms its importance and exemplifies the program's commitment to learning beyond the major and outside the classroom.

The second principle centers on the responsibility of general education to ensure that students acquire deep learning that will prepare them to learn for life. Achieving deep learning, which depends on repeated exposure and practice, required reconceiving general education in terms of learning units and obligating students to take both dedicated courses and enriched courses in foundational skills (writing, oral expression, logico-mathematical thinking); breadth of knowledge (fine arts and humanities, science, mathematics, and technology); perspectives (aesthetic, cultural, ethical, scientific); and research and creative activity. Dedicated courses count as two learning units and concentrate entirely on foundational skill such as oral expression or a perspective such as ethics. Enriched courses count as one learning unit and require students to apply a skill, perspective, or research method. By combining dedicated and enriched courses, students will receive repeated exposure and practice and thereby acquire deep learning.

The third principle is grounded in research from many disciplines that confirms the value of innovative pedagogical approaches that generally fall under the rubric of active learning. Among such approaches are problem-based learning, cooperative and collaborative learning, service learning, technology-enhanced learning, classroom assessment, and writing-to-learn. What they all share is a commitment to more substantive faculty-student interaction and to generative learning that rewards students' curiosity and creativity, exhorts them to take intellectual risks, and conceives of them as disciplined thinkers with the capacity to generate new knowledge. It is precisely because such active, inquiry-based approaches compel students to think critically; acquire, apply, and generate knowledge; and collaborate on projects that they supply students with the richest source of intellectual capital necessary for lifelong learning.

The fourth principle asserts that if students in general education courses are to realize deep learning, they must be academically challenged and engaged from their first day on campus until they graduate. Coincident with the initiative to reform general education was the university's discovery, according to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), that it was failing to engender engagement among first-year students. Further study revealed that far too many first-year courses, many of which satisfied general education requirements, were large lecture formats in which low academic expectations and absence of active learning opportunities encouraged students to feel passive and disengaged. The NSSE findings were taken seriously at all levels of the university and remain a concern today. That many of the recommendations for changing the general education program could also help address the engagement problem made those recommendations seem all the more persuasive and timely.

Second Moment: The Presidential Mission Statement

A second key moment occurred in 2000 with the appearance of the first presidential mission statement, which called for Ohio University to become a learning university and identified general education reform as a fundamental institutional priority. With the initiative to revise general education already underway, the timing of the mission statement was optimal because it elevated the initiative's visibility and signaled that institutional leadership strongly supported it.

The mission statement highlighted both the importance of general education reform and student engagement as well as the aforementioned relationships between them, and increasingly the priorities it specified began to influence institutional decisions. For example, in 2000 the university launched the new faculty initiative (NFI), which allowed departments and schools to compete for new tenure-track faculty positions. Proposals were required to explain how the faculty they were seeking would contribute to the new general education program and promote active learning and engagement among students. Three rounds of the NFI are now complete, and in each one the chief criterion for evaluating proposals has been whether the requested faculty member would advance the institutional agenda of improving general education and stimulating student engagement.

Third Moment: The AQIP Decision

In early 2002, Ohio University decided to work with AQIP in seeking continued accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. Having made this pivotal decision, Ohio University was asked to send institutional representatives to an AQIP Strategy Forum in June 2002 for the purpose of selecting action projects. All four of the action projects that the representatives chose overlapped with the above key moments. The four action projects were:

1. To improve expectations and attitudes of first-year students regarding active educational engagement
2. To develop and support faculty and future faculty involvement in enhancing active student engagement in learning, research, and creative activity
3. To develop and support the university community's involvement in enhancing active student engagement
4. To implement a revised general education in the context of enhanced student engagement

What this partnership with AQIP represents is an ideal opportunity for Ohio University to work in a coordinated way on a set of initiatives essential to accomplishing the significant institutional change that is necessary to becoming, in an authentic sense, a learning-centric university. In the past coordinated action of any sort toward institutional change, including strategic planning, was constrained or undermined by the decentralized nature of the university. Considerable progress already has been made on all four action projects, and the chairs of the committees responsible for the projects are working to align their efforts and recommendations.

The partnership with AQIP, then, is forging the conditions for (1) initiating a university-wide dialogue on critical matters facing the institution, which in turn may well lay the groundwork for building more community spirit in a university that for some time has been fragmented by the absence of a unifying common cause; (2) making real progress on the interconnected initiatives of general education reform and student engagement; and (3) achieving fully the horizontal and vertical change that will be necessary to transform Ohio University into a learning-centric institution.

Fourth Moment: New Academic Leadership

The fourth key moment was the university's decision to hire a provost who recognizes a fruitful convergence among general education reform, efforts to solve the engagement problem, and the AQIP partnership. Devoted to creating a learning-centric university, in January 2003 he presented to the campus his vision of an institution intentionally organized for learning and committed at every level

to “superior educational practices.” Drawing from the frontiers of research on learning, he made a cogent case for why changing educational and societal expectations are impelling the university to dedicate itself to embracing the learning paradigm.

Shifting to this paradigm will entail setting aside traditional instruction focused on knowledge transfer and content coverage in favor of twenty-first-century learner-centered instructional contexts in which teachers are guides who use active learning techniques to construct environments that challenge students to employ higher-order thinking as they collaborate to solve problems and complete projects. Within this paradigm, students are encouraged to develop the capacity to think at the same level and with the same creativity as members of the disciplines aligned with their majors, and they are expected as well to acquire communication fluency, scientific fluency, technological fluency, visual fluency, information fluency, ethical fluency, and intercultural fluency. Such inquiry-based learning is enriched by interdisciplinary connections and by the intelligent use of technology, and integrated within all such innovative practices is a thoroughgoing commitment to multiple forms of assessment and outcomes-based teaching.

Summary

Ohio University is now effectively positioned to accomplish significant change. Excellent progress is being made on the implementation phase of the new general education program. Multiple solutions are being used to solve the engagement problem, including residential learning communities, linked courses, a common book required in many first-year courses, and an improved summer orientation program. Later this spring data will be available from NSSE on how successful these solutions have been. Recently, a concerted effort also has begun to translate the elements of the presidential mission statement into action steps. Perhaps the most encouraging sign is the growing acceptance of the AQIP philosophy of continuous improvement. This philosophy ideally will animate discussions within the university community as it works to coordinate and complete not only the AQIP action projects but all of the above initiatives that are essential if Ohio University is truly to establish its new identity as a learning-centric institution.

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What Changes When Everything Changes: One University's Processes for Unification

Robert L. Funaro, Nancy McGee, and Jacqueline Taylor

Background: A Historical Opportunity

The shift in college student demographics toward the older, part-time, working commuter student is forcing shifts in the ways postsecondary institutions conduct business, with some institutions merging to create new entities and other institutions entering into cooperative ventures to a degree not previously seen. Our institution, Davenport University, underwent a major organizational and cultural change as it was created from the merger of three colleges that had previously worked together as the Davenport Educational System: Davenport College, Detroit College of Business, and Great Lakes College. In place of three colleges whose daily operations functioned essentially independently, Davenport University now is one institution. To achieve this oneness in reality as well as in name, Davenport set about designing and implementing changes in all facets: a change in organizational structure and leadership, a redesign of the entire curriculum, a change to one calendar system, and a unification of all policies and procedures.

Change One: Organizational Structure

The key reasons for a unified governance structure and subsequent administrative unification were quality, effectiveness, and efficiency. These three factors would drive the institution to align university academics and administration, would set the ground rules for the development of a standard set of university-wide policies and procedures, and would set the standard for excellence toward which the university would strive.

Davenport University determined that it was time to change. It soon learned that the processes for organizational change and unification posed many challenges and dilemmas, as well as opportunities for the university to both examine its past and articulate its future. The organizational structure of the institution changed at every level, from the executive levels throughout each level of the system. The principal driver for this change was a shift in the identity of the university as one unit, rather than as a collection of separate and independently operating campuses scattered throughout Michigan and northern Indiana. The major challenges encountered in implementing this change included both the emotional and organizational pull from the former structure as well as the fear of change that would bring the institution into a single, unified organizational structure. While it was clear that these challenges would elicit some resistance, they also afforded the institution an opportunity to both overcome the resistance and demonstrate its commitment to quality and institutional growth, as well as to design opportunities for efficiencies and become a more effective institution of higher learning. The new structures would assist the university to serve its students better and reinvent its commitment to the many communities it served.

The theme became “three into one”: three sets of curricula transitioning into one; three organizational and operational structures transitioning into one; many leadership teams, groups, and systems transitioning into one. Yet, the balance would need to remain that of maintaining the local flavor of a university that serves the needs of local communities throughout the states of Michigan and Indiana.

This process began by the implementation of a single leadership group for the university under the title “president’s cabinet.” Each member of this group would be charged with responsibility for creating a single operations system, working with a single academic structure that monitored and was accountable under the organization and implementation of a single financial structure. It became evident that single marketing and communication systems had to be in operation to deal with the many internal and external constituencies that were part of the university.

One of the first challenges for the institution was the discussion about and ultimate implementation of a single governance system. The emotional, legal, and personal processes proved to be a complex process that the leadership of the institution took on under the direction of the president. Working with the separate boards and the appropriate constituencies, processes, decisions, and implementing procedures took place, unifying the three separate boards into a single board of trustees whose goal and mission was to govern the institution.

Site visits with other similar institutions took place. This assisted the university in learning how other similar institutions unified. There was a lot of learning that resulted in a host of task forces designed to look at each component of the institution in the movement toward unification. The university transition teams looked at the areas of facilities, marketing, academics, a common university calendar, operations, international education, the business office, human resources, advancement, and every other component, with a view toward the unification and implementation of common processes, policies, and procedures.

The process would bring forth a single governance structure, a single unified curriculum, a new academic structure, a single marketing plan, and massive unification that would affect every facet of the university. It was clear that the mantra was that “the best way to predict the future is to create it.”

Change Two: Policies and Procedures

The decision that Davenport University would operate as one unit had been made and communicated prior to the start of work on standardizing policies and procedures. To accomplish this, an initial learning task was to get to know one another as professionals and as persons. There had not been complete consistency of roles and titles in the three colleges, so the work of learning who did what compounded the question of who *now* does what. Basic cultural assumptions about decision making, such as the degree of participative decision making versus top-down decision making, were quickly exposed as committees began their work on standardizing policies and procedures.

A second learning task was determining exactly what the old policies and procedures meant. Although these were available for each college in written form (for the most part), the task of articulating the reasons for the policies and procedures was difficult, especially if people had not been involved in their creation.

As groups discussed their former policies and procedures, each person had to overcome the reflex of assuming that the way his or her former college had done things was for the most part the only reasonable way to do things. It was common for groups to exclaim, “I never realized anyone did that differently,” when policies and procedures were explained. Particularly in the early stages, when people were getting to know each other, the tendency to categorize the policies and procedures of the other group as ones that “just wouldn’t work for us” were common.

As the committees progressed, the tensions caused by the unknown gradually faded. A clearly visible sign of the change was that by the end of the first year, people were no longer choosing only to sit next to people from their former colleges, but were instead truly integrated. As policies and procedures were adapted from each college, the sense that one college must have had it right also faded, and there was much more acceptance of contributions from each college.

Once these learning tasks were accomplished, deeper understandings of the design of policies and procedures were possible. A foundational principle that emerged was the necessity of considering campus or location size in any policy, as well as any procedure. In order to achieve this, it was discovered that the makeup of committees needed to include representatives from campuses of various sizes. Although this may seem to be an obvious point, it was one that only gradually emerged during the course of the first year.

A second and more significant principle that emerged during the second year was the need to create cross-functional teams. Again, this may appear obvious. However, in the initial set-up, when no one was familiar with personnel or procedures across the whole university, committees were set up by functions, such as academics or financial aid. This was seen as the most efficient way to learn and perform. It was found, though, that the work of one committee often needed to be revised when another functional group had a chance to look at the new policies and procedures and explain why something would not work.

The product in a university is its curriculum, but there must also be an operational system to deliver the programs at all the university sites. Academics and operations were establishing committees—the faculty worked on the curriculum; admissions established unified policies; advising worked on processes; operations determined how each campus would be structured for delivery of programs; the online staff coordinated the delivery of the curriculum for the online format; and so on. It was easy for a “disconnect” to occur with everyone focused on individual departmental (silo) areas of responsibility, and it became increasingly apparent that in many situations a cross-functional team was needed to develop more levels of communication as well as raise sensitivities and awareness of challenges in problem-solving processes.

Change Three: Curriculum and Overall Academics

The two aspects of the learning curve referred to above were also present in the task of redesigning the curriculum. Although faculty from the three colleges had similar job responsibilities, their degree of involvement in curriculum design, their expectations of appropriate components of a curriculum, and their methods of working together had differed. In addition, none of the faculty members

were familiar with the specifics of the curriculum outside of their former curriculum, so conversations about what programs should be offered and what courses should make up each program were initially based on assumptions inherent in the former curriculums. Each college had established its own set of success skills or skills for excellence that each student was expected to achieve in order to be successful academically and in the workplace. One of the first steps in bringing faculty together was to integrate those skills into one document that faculty would be able to use in development of programmatic and course outcomes. The Davenport University Excellence Skills (DUES) is the result of the collaborative faculty effort.

To say that the whole area of curriculum change and renewal was approached very carefully, as well as very thoughtfully, is nearly an understatement. The ownership of the curriculum by the faculty is the foundation of a university, and creating the atmosphere for change—encouraging, supporting, and recognizing the early adapters (and bringing along all others)—was a critical step in the unification process. Early on, one of the streams of thought related to taking the “best of the best” and adopting that as the new. That was rapidly ruled out—how could “the best of the best” be determined without making faculty competitive in their decision making process? The better and most expeditious method was one that, in essence, included a programmatic review at the same time as development of a new unified curriculum. It called for establishing an entirely new unified curriculum based upon the mission of Davenport University, the needs and priorities of the students and the businesses and industries served, and knowledge of the past successes of the academic programs of each of the colleges, as well as the priority to integrate the global/international and diversity perspectives. Another compelling factor in this decision was that, in reviewing all courses available in the former three colleges, it was found that over a thousand courses were being offered. This had to change, and this was the time—“restructured expectations” were certainly necessary.

Faculty members who had been instrumental in different discipline areas and who had assumed leadership roles across their former colleges were brought together with the academic deans and an academic task force to begin the integration of the discussion and exchange of ideas process. They needed to begin to know and trust each other and build a high respect for the knowledge of those in each area so that academic discipline teams could be formed to carry out the process of change. It soon became apparent that academic discipline leaders or coordinators were also needed to help facilitate the process and the change. The new university structure featured “schools,” a new concept for the university. The Donald W. Maine School of Business, the School of Technology, and the School of Health Professions were established. Further, the University School was established to coordinate general education disciplines that serve as the foundation of excellence within each school. Curriculum coordinators were hired from the current faculty in each of these schools to facilitate the curriculum unification and development process with the faculty.

As the curriculum coordinators worked with faculty in their own disciplines, they also met regularly to ensure that the connecting pathways were in place for diploma, certificate, and degree completions and that enhanced curricular communication was continually in place. The structure of the curriculum focused on a tiered approach, which included foundations of excellence (general education), business foundations, the major, any appropriate electives, and a new capstone experience. Along with this was a new option for a student to approach a degree from an integrative studies or interdisciplinary approach.

After all curriculum had been developed, another critical step was the structure and process for approvals to develop new programs when needed, to revise programs or courses, and to accomplish regular program review. In addition, an assessment plan must be fully redeveloped based upon the newly changed curriculum, new academic structure, and new program and course outcomes.

Conclusions

Reflections on the results of the past two years have given us several insights. First, major change such as Davenport University undertook involves a level of detail that takes a great deal of time and interaction to uncover. Individuals and groups cannot be rushed into making and implementing changes, so everyone’s patience with the slow process of change is needed. Second, it is vital for systems to be in place to communicate proposed changes to all areas of the institution before the changes are set in stone, in order to avoid hindering the workings of one area or having to redo the proposed change to make it workable for all areas. This involves interaction between functional areas that may not commonly meet, so institutional leadership must create these opportunities. Third, and most significantly, the emotional impact of the changes cannot be ignored. Creating buy-in among personnel requires that the institution be less efficient at times in order to allow opportunities for everyone to provide input. Even after change is implemented, systems are needed to review the operation of the changes to see whether the pull of the comfortable old ways of doing things has lured people back into old patterns. Face-to-face meetings with top leadership are also invaluable in helping everyone understand and accept changes.

The vision and direction of the university was and is to create a customer-friendly environment that focuses its energy around assisting students to be successful in their chosen careers. With a sound academic grounding, the combination of both career/professional guidance and personal guidance are the driving factors in the university’s process for unification. These factors will assist the students to be contributing members of the local communities and leaders in the “knowledge-driven environment of the twenty-first century”

(Davenport University Mission Statement). The lessons learned regarding how to design, communicate, and implement change within a postsecondary institution may be valuable to those at other institutions who are facing similar major changes.

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Self Strategic Study Planning: A Unified, User-Friendly Model

Richard W. Stroede

Introduction

Defiance College is a small (1,000 headcount), church-related (United Church of Christ), liberal arts-based institution recognized by the Templeton Foundation for its character-building programs. Since 1995, it has become a national leader in Service Learning, employing a unique, course-based model in which students take both general education and major discipline courses with Service Learning components. With its largest majors being professional education and business, the college maintains a strong liberal arts base while providing excellent professional preparation. The college completed its self-study process with the team visit in October 2002, and received a recommendation for ten years of continuing accreditation. The process employed the existing planning functions with a minimum of additional structure.

Development of Strategic Planning

During the 1992 comprehensive evaluation, a North Central Association team of consultant-evaluators made two recommendations: "curricular and programming proliferation is in need of examination," and "budgeting processes deserve wider understanding and ownership." In 1994 a new president came to the institution. Noting those recommendations and keenly aware that the fiscal condition of the institution was continuing to erode, he launched an intensive planning initiative.

The original strategic planning committee was an ad hoc group appointed by the president after consultation with most of the campus constituents. It was charged with identifying a niche market and trimming operations to allow for the redirection of resources. The results included a new mission statement, new purposes, a new educational philosophy, new institutional learning outcomes, a commitment to the development of course-based service learning, and the elimination of thirteen majors and tracks with resulting reduction of faculty and staff.

Now an established institutional committee, the strategic planning committee has fifteen members, including a faculty member from each division (selected by the president from two nominees forwarded by the division membership), two faculty elected at large, three students appointed by the president, three to five staff members appointed by the president, the academic dean, and the president. The committee is responsible for the development of a revised strategic plan every three years, with an annual update, the approval and monitoring of the president's cabinet yearly implementation plans, and the approval of the annual operating and capital budgets.

Convergence of Planning Functions

Early in 1999, it became obvious that several planning functions on the campus were about to converge: the comprehensive strategic planning cycle, which required a new strategic plan in fall 2001; preparations for an Ohio Department of Education NCATE review of all teacher education programs, to culminate in a campus visit in 2003; and the comprehensive Higher Learning Commission review to culminate in a campus visit in October 2002.

Recognizing that all three functions shared the need for a comprehensive program review, it was determined that it would be both logical and efficient to combine the processes in an attempt to eliminate duplication of efforts and to use existing planning systems rather than massive self-study task forces. It was also recognized that such an approach would ably demonstrate to the Higher Learning Commission that an ongoing, effective, and efficient planning and budgeting operation was in place at Defiance College. To facilitate the process, the strategic planning process was postponed for one year to coincide with the completion of the self-study report.

Development of the Integrated Plan

After discussion with the strategic planning committee (SPC), the president's cabinet, and the academic affairs (curriculum) committee, it was determined that responsibility for the process should be shared by the SPC and a self-study steering committee

(SSSC) to be appointed by the president. Membership of the fifteen-member SSSC included faculty (each of whom would later chair a task force), staff, students, alumni, and board of trustees members.

The success of earlier strategic planning cycles employing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis directed the design of the plan. The SPC designed and completed the external audit of opportunities and threats, supplying the information for self-study use. The SSSC designed and directed the internal program reviews. To simplify its work, the SPC requested that this information be given to them in the form of a simple list of strengths and weaknesses. All of this was accomplished by a series of charges, which became the self-study plan. A separate oversight committee chaired by the head of teacher education ensured that the information that would be required in the State Department of Education review was being generated in the process.

The external audits were accomplished by three ad hoc task forces and employed a number of focus groups and advisory committees. The internal program reviews were the responsibility of the members of the president's cabinet, with each officer being responsible for a process to involve all members of the unit. In the case of the academic division, the academic affairs committee designed a program review format that was completed by all major programs and became the basis for the committee's abbreviated report to the SPC. The complete reports were employed by the criterion task forces. Existing structures, committees, and advisory groups were employed as extensively as possible, requiring only the addition of the SSSC and seven small task forces (all but one had three members). Chaired by faculty members of the SSSC, the task forces on the five criteria were responsible for the review of all internal reports and the outlining of the corresponding chapters of the self-study report.

Benefits and Challenges

The intention was to demonstrate to the Higher Learning Commission that Defiance College was firmly in control of its destiny—that in 1994 the college had set out in a deliberate manner to determine what it was, where it was going, how it was going to get there, and how it would ensure that the institution could continue into the future. In the opinion of the Higher Learning Commission team, this was successfully demonstrated.

There were major benefits for the campus community as well. The success of the integrated process has demonstrated that the time-consuming and staff-intensive planning functions of the college are effectively leading the development of the institution while involving all components of the campus. In successfully achieving reaccreditation through the same processes that have been used for strategic planning and budgeting, the systems have been legitimized. This positive result compensates for the negative experience of annual budget requests for which there is little available funding.

Little is more important in a self-study process than inclusiveness. The usual result is a collection of very large task forces in order to involve all campus and community constituencies. The depth of inclusiveness achieved with existing systems and organization was surprising. Organizing the study through the president's cabinet ensured that all faculty and staff had an opportunity to be involved. Standing faculty committees ensured representation by all academic divisions. Institutional committees ensured the involvement of all campus constituencies, including students, and allowed for those groups most interested in and knowledgeable about specific concerns (e.g., student affairs, diversity, athletics) to provide information. Existing advisory committees provided input from additional alumni as well as from area professionals and practitioners. Focus groups organized by the strategic planning committee involved an additional number of area citizens, executives, and board of trustee members.

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest benefits of a unified approach to self-study remains the elimination of additional responsibilities. The individuals usually chosen for task force work are those who are already heavily committed to campus governance. Small college faculty and staff are typically over-committed even without the additional burden of serving on task forces.

Obviously, if existing planning functions are to be employed in the self-study process, they must be effective processes. Ineffective planning functions cannot support a successful self-study. Further, the leadership of the planning units must be strong. Weak units or leaders will make the management of the process difficult. Conversely, the process can provide an opportunity for the institution to reexamine the effectiveness of its planning functions.

Conclusion

Defiance College chose to integrate its strategic planning and self-study processes for efficiency but also to demonstrate that the college had established effective, inclusive budgeting and planning functions. The result was a self-study report that described a campus in control of its programs, making decisions based on careful study and considerations, and with a firm vision of the future. This was accomplished using existing committees, advisory groups, and administrative divisions with a minimum of additional structure.

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Chapter 2: Quality Improvement in Higher Education



The Higher Learning Commission

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Applying the Baldrige Criteria for Quality Improvement: Focus on Leadership

Robert A. Sedlak, Julie A. Furst-Bowe, and Claudia Smith

There have been numerous changes in leadership in higher education over the past twenty-five years. The context for leadership has altered dramatically; the view of governance has been transformed; and the visibility and credibility of executives has diminished in many institutions (Casey, 2001). Changing student demographics, technological advances, diminishing financial resources, and shifting faculty attitudes are some of the many issues currently shaping higher education. The role of leadership is vital in addressing these issues, in developing an institution's future, and in building faculty vitality (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993). This paper will address how one public institution, the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout), is successfully dealing with the challenge of leadership through application of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence in Education.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout, founded in 1891, is one of the thirteen publicly supported universities in the University of Wisconsin system. UW-Stout's eight thousand students enroll in programs that are housed in its three colleges: the College of Human Development; the College of Technology, Engineering and Management; and the College of Arts and Sciences. UW-Stout offers a distinctive array of twenty-seven undergraduate and seventeen graduate degree programs that, taken as a group, are unique in the country. UW-Stout has had a long history of quality improvement initiatives, and in 1999 began using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence in Education as the basis for self-assessment and improvement. In 2001, UW-Stout became the first postsecondary institution to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and the campus continues to use the criteria in its planning and assessment efforts.

The Baldrige criteria are divided into seven categories: leadership; strategic planning; student, stakeholder and market focus; information and analysis; faculty and staff focus; process management; and organizational performance results. This paper summarizes the application of the Baldrige criteria at UW-Stout in the leadership category. The leadership category examines how an educational institution's senior leaders address the institution's values, directions, and performance expectations. Also examined are the institution's governance system and how the organization addresses its responsibilities to the community. Finally, the criteria requires that an organization demonstrate how the performance of senior leaders is evaluated and how the organization reviews and improves leadership effectiveness and the leadership system (Baldrige National Quality Program, 2003).

An Overview of Leadership Systems

On paper, UW-Stout's organization is a set of typical, hierarchical university units led by a chancellor. A dean leads each college, with department chairs, program directors, and faculty managing the academic objectives. Chapter 36 of the General Statutes of Wisconsin requires the formation of additional decision-making mechanisms called "shared governance" for the faculty, academic staff, and students. UW-Stout has separate governance units (senates) for each constituency: (1) Faculty Senate, (2) Senate of Academic Staff, (3) Stout Student Association. These groups have primary responsibility for the formation, development, and review of policies concerning their functions as designated by Chapter 36.09. The statute defines "primary responsibility" as the "formal power to initiate action, carry out review, and make recommendations which result in legislation" regarding their institution's "academic and educational activities and faculty personnel matters." The concept of shared governance thus provides for significant faculty, staff, and student representation in the decision-making process, but complicates the organizational structure and inhibits rapid decision making. Recognizing these issues, UW-Stout created an innovative new leadership system in 1996.

This leadership system seeks to remove the organizational complications and inhibitors, encourages responsive two-way communication, and flattens the organization's structure through broad involvement of all governance bodies. The Chancellor's Advisory Council (CAC) is the core of the leadership system. It meets biweekly, and involves nineteen university leaders from the administration, the three governance bodies, and the classified (unionized) staff. These members of the senior leadership team provide the communication conduit to and from their organizations, resulting in direct communication linkages, participatory decision making to

achieve consensus, and enhanced opportunity for meaningful faculty and staff roles in shared governance matters. Supporting the CAC are a number of established committees such as the strategic planning committee and the educational support unit review committee. These established committees contain cross-functional and/or cross-college participation, and will typically report to one of the CAC members. The committees also provide additional avenues for the CAC to deploy university-wide actions, analyze issues, and provide results and feedback to the CAC. Many of UW-Stout's core processes emulate the CAC in extent of involvement and participation, with the goal of gaining broad consensus and buy-in to policies, priorities, and actions.

In addition to the CAC, fifteen senior leaders at UW-Stout meet monthly as members of the Administrative Leadership Team. This group focuses exclusively on team building and leadership development. Meetings are arranged by a small steering committee and include site visits to study best practices at other organizations, interviews with top executives from education and industry, discussion of current higher education literature, and interactions with government and community leaders. Several meetings each year include hands-on exercises in team building, trust development, and problem solving.

Evaluation of Leadership Systems

Numerous methods are deployed to obtain feedback on the performance of senior leaders and the leadership groups. Individually, administrators are evaluated on an annual basis. Evaluations of the chancellor, vice chancellors, and deans include input from surveys that are conducted regularly to assess the performance of these individuals. These evaluations are administered jointly by the Faculty Senate and the Senate of Academic Staff, and canvass all faculty, academic staff, and classified staff members. The surveys are in addition to the normal performance reviews that are conducted annually by an individual's supervisor. Faculty and staff morale surveys, which are administered annually, also include items regarding employee satisfaction with senior leadership.

The Chancellor's Advisory Council and the Administrative Leadership Team are also engaged in self-reflection and evaluation. Informal evaluation is done frequently, and in 2002 the CAC conducted a formal evaluation of its effectiveness using the Global Assessment of Relational Functioning (GARF) adapted for organizations. The results indicated that the group is operating at a high level. The plan is to repeat the use of this instrument on a regular basis. Each Administrative Leadership Team meeting is evaluated, and the results are summarized and distributed by the Office of Budget, Planning and Analysis. As a result of these evaluations, several changes have been made to improve the functioning of both groups.

Overview of Faculty Governance

The UW-Stout Faculty Senate was formed in 1963, and its bylaws and membership have evolved throughout the years. The Chancellor's Advisory Council was instituted in 1996, and at about the same time the faculty voted to reorganize the Faculty Senate. The CAC brought Faculty Senate leaders into direct conversation with leaders of all other constituencies on campus. In reorganizing the Faculty Senate, membership changed from a proportional balance based on college/unit size and at-large members to membership based on one representative per department and a limited number of college and at-large senators, the number of college senators still being determined by proportional distribution.

The Faculty Senate has elected officers, an executive committee, and oversees six standing committees: the elections committee, the educational activities committee, the personnel policies committee, the planning and review committee, the curriculum and instruction committee, and the general education committee. Each of these committees has formal bylaws. Members are elected from the membership of the Faculty Senate as well as from the faculty at large. Each of the committees also includes one or more student representatives and an ex-officio representative from the Office of Academic and Student Affairs. Many of the committees include academic staff representatives.

In accordance with the concept of shared leadership, the chair of the Faculty Senate is a permanent member of the Chancellor's Advisory Council and the chair, vice chair, and past chairs are permanent members of the strategic planning committee, ensuring that faculty input is obtained and voiced on all major decisions and planning processes. In addition, the chancellor and vice chancellor of academic affairs attend every Faculty Senate and executive committee meeting, and Senate of Academic Staff meetings. This ensures that faculty leaders are meeting with senior administration on a weekly basis to discuss issues and concerns. Both the chair and past chair of the Faculty Senate attend the annual summer Chancellor's Advisory Council retreat each year.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Faculty Governance

In order to obtain feedback on its performance, the UW-Stout Faculty Senate conducted a campus-wide survey in fall 2002. The survey was developed and implemented by the personnel policies committee and the Office of Budget, Planning and Analysis. It should be noted that a search for existing governance evaluation instruments did not yield a model that could be used or adapted by UW-Stout.

It was concluded that few faculty senates have engaged in this type of formal evaluation, or have made this type of information available to the public. The survey asked respondents to evaluate faculty governance at the department, college, and campus levels as well as to evaluate their own understanding of and involvement in governance issues.

Eighty-eight of a possible 280 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 31.4 percent. One major finding of the survey was that faculty reported higher ratings for governance at the department level than at the college level. Most respondents indicated that their level of involvement in governance was sufficient. Respondents who were not as involved as they preferred cited "workload" as the main reason for insufficient involvement. The faculty members identified their knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the standing committees and knowledge of their representatives as strengths. Other strengths included faculty involvement in the senate and in standing committees and the ability to discuss issues with senate representatives. However, issues surrounding communication were identified as the largest area needing improvement. Items dealing with communication tended to be rated lower than other items, and respondent comments indicated that senate agendas and minutes were not visible and that there were communication problems among the Faculty Senate, the standing committees, and the faculty.

Among the recommendations for improving the faculty governance system that stem from these results are developing more effective means for senators to communicate information to constituents, as well as informing faculty how they can get involved in governance and bring governance issues forward. An annual report could be developed that would highlight senate accomplishments, and the Web presence of the senate could be expanded. New ways to publicize opportunities for individuals to be involved in the senate could be made available as could training on the skills needed to be a successful senate leader. The faculty governance evaluation system is at the beginning of its developmental cycle. The surveys discussed here reveal perceptions and highlight areas for improvement. Plans are now underway to use the full governance survey every third year and to use a one-minute governance survey in intervening years.

Additionally, a system of compiling and analyzing data related to the official actions taken by the Faculty Senate is being developed. This will complement the survey data and help the Faculty Senate align its committee work with standing committee charges. The larger issues of how one "speeds up the process" without sacrificing stakeholder dialogue is still a challenge for faculty governance. It is hoped that the senates will make a concerted and coordinated effort to develop creative solutions to these problems. Potentially, as senators become more knowledgeable of the CAC organizational successes, they too could invent a more streamlined and inclusive process.

In summary, the University of Wisconsin-Stout has taken the concepts of shared governance and leadership systems very seriously as an institution. The use of the Baldrige criteria has been critical as the senior leadership team continues to improve members' own leadership effectiveness and that of the leadership system. In their written feedback to the campus in fall 2001, Baldrige examiners noted that "shared governance is a fundamental concept at UW-Stout for fostering a culture to attract and retain students, faculty and staff. The traditional university structure is complemented by the Chancellor's Advisory Council and governance groups to promote collaboration and cooperation at all levels." Continuous assessment and evaluation of all individuals and groups involved in the leadership system is essential to ensure that the system continues to function at a high level.

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Putting Total Quality Improvement Management to Work In a University Setting

Allan M. Hoffman and Mary Pat Wohlford-Wessels

Introduction

American higher education, like many institutions and agencies in our culture and society, is often criticized as being inefficient, ineffective, and out of touch with the complex needs of our twenty-first-century technological society. The ever-changing workforce and student cohorts are becoming more diverse, much more demanding, and far less accepting than their predecessors.

Description

Putting total quality to work in the academic enterprise can help create a culture and climate that openly enhances measurable outcomes and focuses on student learning, effective use of resources, and achievement. The motives to fully implement and integrate a quality model relate to capturing a “market share” of students and, in many ways, to containing escalating costs. In essence, society is demanding an unprecedented level of accountability. Hence the academic quality model provides philosophies, methods, and systems to address implementation of measurable quality outputs. Higher education is adopting methods not only to expand curriculum and educational offerings, but also to improve measures that focus on student learning and achievement.

Session Purpose

This discussion is designed to focus on key strategies and variables relating to how to design, implement, and evaluate a total quality management model in a university setting. Creating an organizational culture and climate that openly embrace and enhance outcomes and focus on student learning and the effective development and allocation of resources are discussed and described.

Helping students learn is the core value and primary focus of the performance improvement model and of the university. Academic activities such as teaching, research, and clinical education are the key and guiding principles of this model and focus on helping maximize student performance and outcomes.

Institutional Setting—Putting Quality to Work: A Case in Point

Des Moines University is an academic health sciences center that has developed and fully integrated a total quality improvement model as part of the College of Health Sciences organizational culture. This model is patterned after the Higher Learning Commission Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) and is an organizational management technique that emphasizes academic quality improvement in educational, research, and service efforts and functions. The university and all academic units have established quality improvement committees in an effort to create an environment that enhances performance and focuses on student learning and achievement as a core organizational value. Total quality is viewed as a measure to save resources and use talent and time effectively and efficiently. All college and university constituents and external stakeholders are in partnership to assess and focus on improvement, student learning, and outcomes.

Among the key variables focused on are how to create an organizational culture and climate that openly discusses and seeks methods to maximize and enhance student outcomes and achievement, and methods to create systems that embrace and value the focus on student learning and integration of that value into the research mission of the university. Identification and focus on the efficient allocation of resources and a redirection of these resources as needed is a core concept in this model. Other issues emphasized are the need to reward participation in total quality management and the development of organizational documents—bylaws, mission statements, and committee structures, among others—that clearly articulate total academic quality improvement as an organizational

goal and core value and facilitate documentation of success. Creating an open, ongoing, non-threatening dialogue about academic quality improvement in performance is a crucial ingredient to fully integrating this methodology. Building trust and motivating and rewarding efforts to enhance quality are also discussed, as are implementing objectives and strategies.

The guiding values of the performance improvement model include

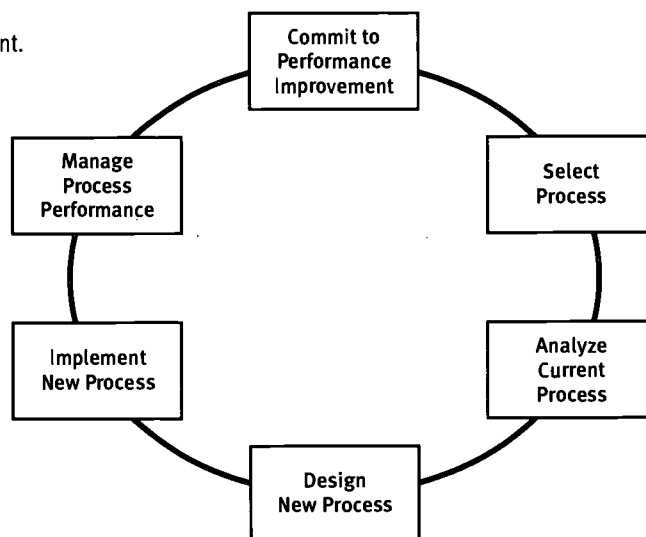
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ○ Focus | ○ Leadership |
| ○ Environment that supports learning | ○ Valuing people |
| ○ Responsiveness | ○ Systems thinking |
| ○ Innovation and improvement | ○ Data-driven outcomes assessment |
| ○ Involvement | ○ Collaborative solution development |

The performance improvement model is designed to allow interdisciplinary teams to be successful at both systems thinking and process improvement. This strategy has been successful in improving processes ranging from enrollment development to alumni relations. Improvements include such items as enhancing committee meetings and redirecting resources.

Leaders must believe it, live it, and effectively communicate their commitment to all constituents—faculty, staff, students, and outside groups. In our experience, leadership commitment is significant in developing a culture focused on quality improvement. Visible, ongoing leadership involvement is perhaps the most critical element in creating a culture and climate for a successful academic quality improvement effort.

The process improvement steps are as follows.

1. Institutional leadership must commit to improvement.
2. Identify and select the process that will make a difference to academic success.
3. Analyze current processes.
4. Design new processes.
5. Implement new processes.
6. Managed improvement.
 - Goals and learning objectives
 - Assessment tool used
 - Time schedule
 - Distribution of results
 - Use of results (performance improvement)



Sample Reporting Document

Des Moines University STUDENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT PLAN

Department:

Date:

Goals and Learning Objectives	Assessment Tool Used	Time Schedule	Distribution of Results	Use of Results	Responsibility	Evidence

Responsibility

Selected Examples of Reporting—Performance Improvement

I. Institutional Culture

- a. Collective/Shared Values
- b. Mission

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs—Level One	
Collective/Shared Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A shared understanding of the purposes, advantages, and limitations of assessment has not evolved or is just emerging. 	CHS Assessment:
Mission	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Neither the institutional statements of mission or purposes nor of educational goals includes wording about student learning. 	CHS Assessment: Mission and purposes of CHS programs include student learning

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs—Level Two	
Collective/Shared Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A shared understanding of the purposes, advantages, and limitations of assessment exists and is broadening to include areas beyond the instructional division. 	CHS Assessment: CHS assessment processes include areas beyond instruction, such as student services and student support
Mission	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The institutional statements of mission or purposes or of educational goals state the value the institution places upon student learning. 	CHS Assessment: CHS program mission, purpose, and goal statements demonstrate the value of student learning.

Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement—Level Three	
Collective/Shared Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessment has become an institutional priority, a way of life. 	CHS Assessment: Program assessment plans and CHS Bylaws incorporate assessment.
Mission	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The institutional statements of mission or purposes and educational goals include language indicating the high value placed on student learning. 	CHS Assessment: Assessment activities focus on student learning.

II. Shared Responsibility

a. Faculty

Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs—Level One	
Faculty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only a few academic departments or programs have described measurable objectives for each of their educational goals. 	CHS Assessment: All programs have measurable objectives that are included in assessment plans.

Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs—Level Two	
Faculty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty in many or most departments have developed measurable objectives for each of the program's educational goals. 	CHS Assessment: Program assessment plans include measurable objectives

*This material represents selected items of a more comprehensive reporting system.

Annual quality improvement reviews require formal, broad-based reporting of opportunities for improvement, action steps for positive change, and enhanced outcomes.

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Planning and Performance: Getting Where You Need to Go Using Key Performance Indicators

Rich Wagner, Mike White, and Dick Pooley

Introduction

This paper is an overview of the processes used by the board of trustees, faculty, staff, and leadership team of Dunwoody College of Technology to manage the organization's performance. Key to making sure metrics indicate performance is ensuring that they align with the strategic and operating goals of the organization. Preparing a strategic plan is analogous to developing a travel plan using a map. Organizations are good at preparing the map, but once the trip begins they often forget to measure the progress of the vehicle making the journey. Are we on the right road? Should we change the travel plan because of construction? How many miles per gallon are we averaging? At this rate, do we have enough money to finish? Do we need an oil change? These are the kinds of questions that organizations need to ask themselves to ensure the viability of their mission and the success of their plans. This paper describes the process used at Dunwoody to develop a travel plan and the metrics that continuously monitor progress against the plan.

College Background

Dunwoody College of Technology is a private, non-profit, endowed, two-year technical college operating in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. The college was founded in 1914 when the prominent Minneapolis businessman, William Hood Dunwoody, left nearly \$3 million dollars in his will to establish the school. His purpose was to "provide for all time a place where youth without distinction on account of race, color or religious prejudice, may learn the useful trades and crafts, and thereby fit themselves for the better performance of life's duties." When his wife, Kate L. Dunwoody, died in 1915, she left an additional trust to help sustain the new school.

Dunwoody offers twenty-two occupational programs. Many of Dunwoody's instructional methods have roots in the early twentieth century. Charles A. Prosser, the first day school director at Dunwoody, advanced his tenets for efficient vocational education, and some of his beliefs are still evident today. Dunwoody prides itself on the hands-on training students receive. Crossing all domains of learning, Dunwoody emphasizes telling students how to do it, showing students how to do it, and finally letting students perform the tasks. Shop areas resemble the work environment, and occupational instructors are skilled technicians. General education classes ensure that Dunwoody graduates are well rounded intellectually and prepared for good citizenship. Instruction is organized on a quarterly (twelve-week) schedule. Programs are three or six quarters in length, leading to a diploma or associate of applied science (A.A.S.) degree. Dunwoody has an enrollment of 1,200 full-time students and 800 part-time students.

The Challenge

In 1996, a presidential transition marked a new era at Dunwoody. Seeking to commit to a continuous quality improvement journey, Dunwoody became a member of the Continuous Quality Improvement Network (CQIN) and sought initial NCA accreditation. In 1998, initial accreditation was received. Because of the commitment of leadership to continuous quality improvement, the college joined the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) in 1999. In fall 2000, a comprehensive strategic visioning session began. After nearly two years of meetings and interviews, the college's leadership team developed strategic goals and a process that ensured that operational plans supported the strategic goals. In order to achieve these goals, the college needed to measure progress and make decisions based on data. This created an effort to develop key performance indicators (KPIs).

Planning and Performance

The strategic planning process began in November 2000, and concluded in July 2001. This comprehensive process identified opportunities for Dunwoody and established a five-year plan. Another outcome of this process was a planning cycle that ensured that

the college stayed on plan and had flexibility to change as external and internal factors changed. The yearly cycle allows the organization to analyze its competitive environment, discuss progress with key stakeholders, and adjust the five-year plan and current-year operating plan. In order to make these adjustments, the organization uses key performance indicators. The strategic planning cycle follows the organization's fiscal year and is broken down into specific action plans for each quarter. Remember, a comprehensive strategic visioning session occurred first. This session created strategic goals that provide guidance for the next five years. The strategic planning cycle provides a tool to analyze the organization's ability to achieve the strategic goals in a dynamic environment.

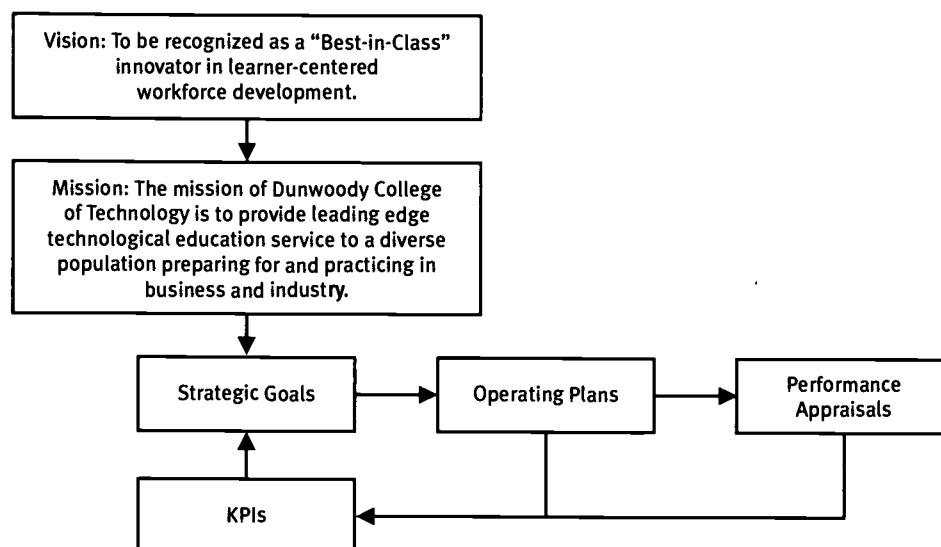
Table 1. Dunwoody's Strategic Planning Cycle
(Quarters of Fiscal Year)

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement current-year operating plan ○ Analyze and evaluate last year's operating plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Begin developing next year's plan ○ Board-led strategic thinking, SWOT analysis, stakeholder session to identify strategic shifting and advisement ○ Set next year's strategic goals ○ Begin planning, led by managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue developing next year's plan ○ Board of trustees receives preliminary budget ○ Board reviews and approves strategic plan and operational plan updates ○ Continued operational planning to integrate changes from board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finish developing next year's plan ○ Board approves operational plan and final budget for next fiscal year ○ Final adjustments made to next year's plan

Key performance indicators monitor the attainment of strategic goals. The indicators are an essential part of the overall planning process. They demonstrate success and opportunities for improvement and provide the information needed to adjust strategic and operational plans. As an example, during fall 2002, enrollment numbers did not meet plan. One of Dunwoody's KPIs is enrollment. It includes head count, credits sold, and revenue. Understanding the ramifications of not achieving the planned enrollment on the operational plan, including the budget, and the strategic plan allowed the college to react. This reaction included adjusting the budget and changing the strategic goal for enrollment. Although the college did not meet the fall 2002 goal, the administration still felt comfortable with the fall 2005 goal. Adjusting the step changes between years via comprehensive enrollment planning demonstrated that the fall 2005 goal is reasonable. Enrollment in the fall of 2004 will again either track plan or require additional adjustments. This example illustrates the technique used at Dunwoody to link the strategic vision with strategic goals and operational planning and demonstrates the role key performance indicators play in decision making.

Updated and refined strategic goals and operating plans are outcomes of the strategic planning cycle. Managers use the operating plan to develop action items to achieve operating goals. The action items become part of the employee appraisal document. This ensures that accountability for the strategic and operating plans occurs at every level in the organization. The process works as follows. Each year managers create operational plans that move the organization toward achieving the strategic goals. A binder is used to organize the operating plans and represents the leadership team's goals for the next fiscal year. Conducting budget development in parallel ensures that resources back actions. Managers use the operating plan to develop individual goals for faculty and staff. Examination of KPIs during the course of the year evaluates the success of achieving the goals of the operating plan.

The following example illustrates this process. One of the college's strategic goals is to grow enrollment of full-time students over the next three years. To accomplish this, numerous functional areas develop action plans. Academic affairs provides program planning, marketing and admissions develop the marketing plan, student services develop action plans to promote student life and reduce student departures, and development develops strategies to increase scholarship funding. The goal of enrollment growth is achieved if each of these areas achieves its action plan. Examination of KPIs over the course of the year from data generated by each area allows the leadership team to monitor the progress of the organization along this "roadway." The following diagram illustrated this process.

Figure 1. Strategic and Operational Linkages

Dunwoody's Key Performance Indicators

Dunwoody uses key performance indicators to link operational activities with operational efficiency and progress toward achieving strategic goals. The various functional units within the college provide input to the calculation of the KPIs. KPIs are examined by the leadership team to monitor strategic progress and operational efficiency. For Dunwoody, KPIs are actually key quality indicators that fall into four distinct categories. It was realized early on that while developing a single number as an indicator is possible, it would not be practical to use the one-number method as a key performance indicator for any given operational area. Dunwoody's KPIs are made up of multiple inputs per category, which are reviewed by the leadership team at predetermined times throughout the year. The category may include reports and information from more than one business unit. The following table illustrates the category, inputs, and reporting frequency.

Table 2. Dunwoody Key Performance Indicators

Category	Input	Reporting Frequency
Student Learning Assessment	Portfolio Assessment	Yearly
	Outside Certifications	Yearly
Enrollment	Head Count	Monthly
	Credits Sold	Quarterly
	Revenue	Quarterly
Financial	P&L Statement	Quarterly
	Balance Sheet	Quarterly
	Cash-Flow Statement	Quarterly
	Budgets	Monthly
	Annual Fund	Monthly
Stakeholder Satisfaction	Campaign	Monthly
	Program Health	Yearly
	Noel Levitz	Bi-Yearly
	Student Opinion	Yearly
	Employee Satisfaction	Yearly
	Alumni Satisfaction	Yearly

History

Dunwoody's development of KPIs began at a leadership team retreat in 1999. At this retreat, the leaders of the school developed a list of thirteen key performance indicators. As the college progressed through its strategic visioning process in 2000 and 2001, a need became apparent for a new definition and choice of KPIs. At the end of the visioning process, Dunwoody identified four key performance objectives that linked to the strategic goals. It was determined that performance indicators were needed to show the progress in accomplishing these objectives. These indicators need to reflect the importance of each objective. That is, they need to reflect meaningful data that correctly reflect the construct of the objective. The four performance categories link to the yearly operational plans and the long-term strategic goals.

Dunwoody's new concept for KPIs became "any measure that we as a college must meet or exceed to be successful." The key indicators are coupled with a system that incorporates the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) model to ensure that the college continuously improves the processes that control and govern these objectives. Dunwoody believes in the philosophy that if it cannot be measured, it cannot be controlled, and subsequently it cannot add value to the organization. This new definition resulted in the development of four KPI categories in spring 2001. Each KPI links to one of five strategic goals and is critical in assuring the success of Dunwoody College of Technology.

Summary

Today, Dunwoody's leadership team continually monitors key performance indicators and uses data to make decisions to guide the institution. The leadership team meets twice a month, and each meeting includes review of key performance indicators. Discussion around the significance of the data and progress toward achieving critical goals leads to decision making that is informed and congruent with achieving the operational plans and strategic goals of the organization. Because management subscribes to a continuous quality improvement philosophy, review and improvement of key performance indicators is ongoing. Reporting mechanisms and procedures are upgraded and refined. Graphs with trends indicate direction in enrollment, retention, and placement, and allow conversations about efforts to improve performance. Financial data demonstrate the fiscal position of the organization; they illustrate expenditures on academic programs, administration, support functions, and other overhead; and promote conversation about the allocation of resources. Metrics measure the effect of expanding expenditures in student services on retention and student satisfaction. At this level, the metric is very broad, representing a snapshot of the current condition in a format understandable to all members of the leadership team. This process at Dunwoody allows the leadership team to "drive" the organization on the road map developed during the strategic visioning session.

Lessons Learned

- Key performance indicators track operation and strategic objectives.
- Define objectives, then develop key performance indicators.
- Don't dilute indicators to the point that they become meaningless. An example of this is trying to measure fiscal health with a single item that is a combination of other key metrics.
- Ensure that key performance indicators measure items that link to the strategic plan and or the operating goals.
- Assign accountability for developing and reporting the metric.
- Develop reporting and review protocols.
- Separate poor performance from personal agendas.
- Any data collected and reports generated need to add value.
- Don't be afraid to use data to investigate what you think you already know.
- Ensure that the inputs are salient to the construct.

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Using Dashboards to Navigate to Institutional Destinations

Laurie Adolph, Rassoul Dastmozd, Ron Serpliss, and Gail Spies

Introduction

While higher educational institutions collect growing amounts of information and data, organizing and using the data for a variety of audiences and to target for improvement is a challenge. One tool to facilitate organizing, sharing, and monitoring data is a dashboard. Like a dashboard in a car, this tool has key indicators that can be watched to determine if critical processes and systems are working as needed and expected. Performance parameters can be set, and when the indicators suggest that a process is out of control, segmented, more finely detailed data can be analyzed to determine where the performance gaps are so that appropriate strategies are developed to bring the process back into control.

Eastern Iowa Community College District (EICCD) is a three-college district that has committed to the AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) model of alternative accreditation. It is composed of Scott Community College in Bettendorf; Clinton Community College in Clinton, and Muscatine Community College in Muscatine. As a charter member of the process, EICCD is now in its third year of work on its action projects. The three projects chosen by the district focus on (1) developmental education student success, (2) students' successful transition to four-year institutions of higher education and to careers, and (3) alternative delivery students' satisfaction and success. The AQIP teams' use of dashboards for these systems has facilitated the accomplishment of project improvement goals.

The Development of a Dashboard

Development of a dashboard begins with the development of a system's map. The beginning and ending points of the system need to be defined, and a cross-functional team should be called together that includes individuals whose work is included within the system. The group brainstorms about the facilities and equipment, materials, procedures, and people that are necessary in the environment of the system. They identify key or critical processes, the institution's approach to accomplishing those processes, and measures that would indicate whether the processes are working. For example, a key process in the developmental education system is assessment of entering students; the institution's approach would be mandatory assessment; and the measure of the process's effectiveness would be the percentage of entering students assessed for a given semester. The team would then identify the key goals or outcomes of the system and outcomes measures that would indicate successful system performance. The final component of the system's map is identification of the system's external and internal stakeholders.

The dashboard (preferably a one-page graphic) is developed using the process and outcome indicators identified through system mapping. Once the dashboard is created, the team concentrates on Deming's DMAIC process (define, measure, analyze, improve, and control) to collect data, set performance targets, identify gaps between performance and goals, develop strategies to improve performance, and evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement strategies. The dashboard is used by the team to monitor all key process data, and can be reviewed in cycles that fit the project: A dashboard on retention within courses can be reviewed each semester; one on enrollment can even be reviewed daily. The team can also use the dashboard to share its work in a concise and visual way with audiences such as the board of directors, faculty and staff groups, and administrative councils.

EICCD Team Accomplishments

Working with a system map, dashboard, and the DMAIC process, the EICCD AQIP teams have accomplished a great deal. For example, the AQIP developmental education team revised entering assessment instruments' cut scores after third-party cut score analysis correlated entering scores and course grades; devised a method to record professionally developed advising in addition to instrument advising; increased entering student assessment and placement; segmented developmental student learning achievement and satisfaction results; and measured developmental students' performance in college transfer classes after completing developmental coursework. Working with a newly developed general education program review process resulted in the implementation of a writing sample exit process for developmental writing at all three colleges.

The AQIP career transfer team developed a plan of action to proactively engage students, faculty, campus placement officers, and the associate director of institutional research in the collection and reporting of data related to placement of all graduates of career and technical education programs. The team has established processes to inform students of available placement services and to register them through placement officers' visits to targeted classes. Follow up with faculty members concerning placement data available on graduates of their programs has been increased, and the team is creating a district-wide database for tracking placement information.

The AQIP transfer transition team established baseline data for transfer results from four schools, and satisfaction data from graduate and leaver surveys; developed a communication process with two additional transfer schools in order to obtain transfer reports; and standardized district reports to match regent reports. They are evaluating AAS degree articulation agreements; increasing the number of transfer schools reporting transfer student information; evaluating graduate and leaver survey results; and developing improvement plans.

The AQIP alternative delivery team collected baseline data on student retention and success in alternative delivery courses, and data comparing academic achievement and satisfaction in traditional delivery and alternative delivery courses, with some segmentation of data based on type of alternative delivery method. The team is working to increase the number of students responding to the Web-based survey of satisfaction, to notify students early when they are doing poorly, and to improve academic advising to help students better understand the expectations and responsibilities of alternative delivery courses.

The Benefits of Developing and Using a Dashboard

Benefits of the use of dashboards begin from the first step of system's mapping and include

- Developing a shared understanding and appreciation of the system's steps, goals, and connections to other processes and people
- Creating an environment that encourages team members to think in terms of systems and processes, supplier-receiver relationships, data-based decision making, segmenting data for targeting improvement strategies, and focusing on results rather than processes
- Assembling people whose work contributes to the accomplishment of the goals of the system and whose individual learning can be shared to increase the institution's learning and decrease costs and cycle times, build a greater sense of community, and increase student success
- Sharing data—positive and negative—within the team in a non-threatening way, to be used for purposeful improvement plans
- Sharing data with audiences outside the team to inform them of changes, share best practices, train new employees, and, again, foster systems thinking
- Capturing in a concise and visual way the scope and outcomes of an improvement team's work

Conclusion

Effective teamwork requires a shared purpose, a common understanding of the problems in a process, a method of process improvement that uses data and personal and institutional learning to target improvement strategies, and a way of monitoring outcomes to make sure that the process improvement strategies are continually effective. Dashboards can be used to facilitate effective teams.

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Alternative Road to “Paradise”: Growing Toward AQIP

Don Betz, Ed Cunliff, and Donna Guinn

The Journey Begins

Several months before the unveiling of AQIP at the NCA Annual Meeting in 2000, there was preliminary notification, the winds of change. At that time, the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) had already begun planning its self-study process. UCO was in the midst of change itself. Virtually all of its deans, assistant deans, and academic affairs professional staff were new to their positions. It was a time of visioning for the future. The idea that the institution could productively link through NCA with other institutions in a process that would foster continuous improvement was irresistible. It was a road that had to be explored.

The Alternative Road (not necessarily with yellow bricks)

The UCO personnel changes that coincided with the unveiling of AQIP may have been the primary reason we decided to not take a direct path to AQIP. As a result of those changes only one member of the UCO academic affairs executive council (AAEC) had more than two years experience “at the table.” The AAEC consists of deans, assistant deans, the provost, and the provost’s assistant vice presidents; and most of them had been at the institution in other positions.

Relatively new to NCA, UCO’s staff liaison also seemed excited about AQIP and its potential. During the annual meeting in 2000, the liaison and UCO staff discussed the possibility of using the special emphasis as a means of piloting AQIP. We agreed to pursue the possibility of AQIP as a special emphasis. After brainstorming for about a year, an agreement was reached between NCA and UCO that would allow UCO to “take a pro-active approach to reaccreditation by utilizing the ‘special emphasis’ process to pilot participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Project.”

The special emphasis agreement was consistent with the goals for the overall self-study and, specifically, with the following two goals.

1. To systematically create an atmosphere of continuous self-renewal and growth that connects the internal and external processes of the university, including assessing, reporting, planning, and budgeting
2. To pilot the use of the Academic Quality Improvement Process model and to participate in the Higher Learning Commission collaborative quality colloquia as a means of growth and improvement

Our direction was set: “UCO’s vision of the special emphasis is to continually enhance the quality of student learning and of the UCO learning environment.” UCO operationalized this vision, indicating that while it anticipated a variety of goals and initiatives, the institution would begin in two areas: undergraduate research and faculty enhancement.

The organizational process began with the self-study committee, a subcommittee for the special emphasis, and two committees tied to the areas of faculty enhancement and undergraduate research. One of the co-chairs of the self-study committee chaired the special emphasis subcommittee, bringing a training and development (and total quality management) backpack along for the journey.

The Tin Man

We first learned to become friends with ourselves. The sense that we were on a path together was pivotal. We recognized that we were trying something new and that we had to be open to different perspectives. The only predetermined concepts about the journey were that we wanted to make the institution a better place and that we would follow only initiatives that would have a positive impact. The president, the provost, and the provost’s staff agreed that the whole process of the self-study, including the exploration of AQIP, would lead to purposeful action.

Actions were more important than words. As issues would arise during the self-study process, they were addressed when possible and tagged for later consideration when a clear way to address them was not immediately evident. Integrity was an essential element in this process.

Taking an unknown road meant the university would need to learn as it moved forward. As educators, we already valued the learning process. Faculty would discover, “Hey, this is what we already do” or “This is just the scientific method” or “Our accrediting body uses the same language.” People began to feel a sense of familiarity with quality terms and concepts of the process. Concerns about AQIP as a “business technique” or arguments about the word “customers” existed, but those were short-lived challenges. Continuing our own education would help us find the way.

The Scarecrow

No road is clear of bumps; a successful journey is a matter of how you cope with bumps and what you learn from the experience. A local consultant provided one of our first training activities. It became a bumpy learning experience with the use of the word *customer*. Ironically, a business faculty member was the first to object to the term. It took thirty minutes before the consultant could continue. We learned to avoid the “C word,” to move past conflicts, to see beyond terminology, and to reaffirm the commitment to remain open to differing perspectives.

External consultants have frequently provided parts of the “brain” as UCO has traveled down the alternate road. Dr. Susan Engelkemeyer, a Baldrige examiner from Babson College, provided an early overview of quality processes and theory. This helped establish a conceptual framework. She spoke to administrative staff, faculty, department chairs, and community leaders. As challenges arose during the meeting with department chairs, self-study leaders listened and learned as part of a shared experience.

The next step was to add more concrete ideas to the concepts. Dr. John Dew, University of Alabama, came to UCO and discussed with UCO administrators and faculty (including chairs) specific quality examples from the University of Alabama and other institutions. UCO’s next guest speaker on quality was Dr. Gerald Svendor, West Shore Community College, who spoke with a more focused approach, primarily to faculty audiences, regarding quality applications to specific courses. Most recently Dr. Dew returned to provide a day of training to the newly created continuous improvement team, the new umbrella group for continuous improvement activities.

The progression of continuing education activities from conceptualization to application continues. Focusing on the conceptual level first allowed faculty and staff to understand that quality is not a new management technique, but a way of thinking and being that is congruent with the mission of an educational institution. As we move more into application, internal faculty and staff have begun to make some presentations. They will have an increasing role in this process.

The Lion

While slicing our way through the overgrowth, it was helpful to enlist the assistance of others and use their strength and experience. Timing did not allow us to immediately attend AQIP workshops, but AQIP staff supported our entry into a collaborative quality colloquium (CQC). Though contact with that group initially involved electronic exchange and lacked clear direction, the experience was in some ways a source of courage. We found there were others, though not exactly like us, who shared the same interest. The sense of connectedness led to a gathering at the next Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting, followed by a day-long meeting at one of the institutions a few months later. The importance of that group to UCO’s growth has been subtle, but significant. Their progress became our reference points. Though the CQC concept may have faded with the advent of the state quality improvement support groups, they represented the start of the networking process. UCO’s network has expanded into the Oklahoma Quality Award Foundation and the National Consortium for Continuous Improvement, both organizations to which our CQC introduced us.

The strength gained by networking was most dramatically experienced through a couple of “road trips.” One of the institutions geographically closest to UCO that was also involved in AQIP was Fort Hays State University (FHSU). After initial contact with FHSU, Dr. Rob Scott and Dr. Diane Pfeifer traveled to UCO to share their quality experiences. These were generally informal interactions, but they included meetings with several groups: the self-study committee, the special emphasis groups, and the provost’s immediate staff. The chief academic officer for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education attended the meeting with the provost and his staff.

One good visit deserved another, and UCO sent two cars of faculty and academic staff members to FHSU to visit first-hand with a variety of groups, including members of their faculty senate. Hearing pros and cons from people already involved in the quality process had a very positive impact on our faculty and staff and resulted in several quality champions on the UCO campus.

The Wizard

AQIP programs and experiences have been invaluable in the process. A number of UCO faculty and academic staff members have participated in AQIP activities. The annual meeting has been a good means of learning more both at the conceptual and practical levels. The AQIP leadership seminar opened eyes to a greater extent on several critical concepts, such as systems thinking and stakeholder involvement. One UCO academic officer serves as an AQIP facilitator and has learned much from the strategy forum. The AQIP Web site has been another source of practical examples of what is being done with continuous improvement processes.

Several UCO administrators have trained as Oklahoma quality examiners. Though slightly different from the AQIP process, the training and the experience have helped clarify the rigor of the approach and the benefits of such a self-study.

Witches and Flying Monkeys

Traveling any new road holds challenges, not the least of which is trying to chart a course. Whether or not the special emphasis is the appropriate path for an institution to pilot AQIP is something the institution will have to determine with the Higher Learning Commission. With no precedents, there were challenges in what UCO developed. In an effort to specify a goal, we devoted too much attention to the two action items and not enough to our intention to find our way to AQIP. In AQIP terminology, it might be said that we tried to find action projects before we had clearly committed to the process. That was true in that our main objective was to pilot AQIP, not to create a special emphasis in faculty enhancement or undergraduate research.

This confusion, from UCO's perspective, has not detracted from the process, though it may have been difficult for a team of traditionally trained C-Es as they approached the institutional visit and report development. The willingness of the Higher Learning Commission to let us experiment was important. If we had not used the special emphasis to confirm our commitment to quality, it is easy to imagine that we might have been discouraged by many of the challenges (the witches and flying monkeys), such as budget and resources, and stalled in our quest toward quality.

Back in Kansas (that's OZlahoma)

The areas of faculty enhancement and undergraduate research are making steady progress. We will improve our benchmarking. Other areas certainly would have been easier to measure. An unanticipated action with significant impact has been the reconceptualization of the program review process as a departmental self-study linking continuous improvement to strategic planning and budgeting.

We learned to more clearly write special emphasis agreements. Focusing on the broader issue, which we did in practice, would have facilitated the understanding of the visiting team. If we were to begin the journey again, another couple of road trips to other institutions would help to dramatically increase capacity among faculty and staff.

The university has, to a large extent, become familiar with continuous improvement concepts and has supported this direction as being a natural part of the educational process. Will UCO become an AQIP institution? That part of the story remains unwritten. Will UCO continue on a continuous improvement road? Definitely, for that is the road to "paradise."

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Completing AQIP's Vital Focus Assessment: What We Learned

Leonard G. Heldreth and Teresa Kynell

Northern Michigan University (NMU), a mid-sized regional university of nearly 9,000 students and nearly 1,200 faculty and staff, became interested in the AQIP accreditation model in 2001 and made formal application for AQIP admission and the required self-evaluation in 2002. During that period of time, we learned a great deal about the AQIP process, including the considerable preparation required, the logistical support necessary, and the expectations and concerns of personnel involved in the process. Our experience taught us, however, that with careful planning, determination, and attention to detail, both the AQIP application and Vital Focus Self-Study can bring effective results to an institution.

This presentation covers a time period of two-and-a-half years, with emphasis on the period from February 2002 to March 2003. We describe the various steps involved, indicate what we did, evaluate how we could have done it better, and offer suggestions to other schools on ways to improve the process. Since we chose to use the AQIP self-evaluation instrument, Vital Focus, we discuss in detail the three major steps in that process—the Constellation Index questionnaire, the Campus Conversation Day, and the strategies for turning the recommendations from the Campus Conversation Day into action projects that make a significant difference. Our goal is to point out that “it’s not so bad” and to indicate how others, drawing upon our experience, can do even better by avoiding some of the problems we encountered. Last, we provide an overview on whether we made the right decision, and how we feel about our future in the AQIP accreditation track.

Northern Michigan University, located in the heart of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, offers academic, certificate, and diploma programs. Five strong unions support the faculty and the clerical and technical personnel, with very effective results. Northern has successfully negotiated union contracts for well over twenty years without strike or serious incident, and the university enjoys a history of collegiality and good working relationships.

Northern’s last accreditation evaluation in 1994 revealed that an institution-wide assessment program was a critical issue, and assessment has remained a primary concern ever since. Considerable work has been completed on a university-wide assessment program, but we knew that completion and implementation of the outcomes assessment program would likely be one of our action projects, and that has turned out to be the case. In most other areas, the university was in acceptable or good shape, and a sense of working together to achieve goals had been fostered by the success of the Teaching, Learning, and Communication (TLC) initiative, which provided every student and faculty member with an IBM Thinkpad computer. The logistics of successfully distributing two to four thousand computers each fall (all computers are replaced every two years) showed faculty, staff, and students that we could take on big projects and succeed. Thus, to further implement our assessment program, to create new action projects, and to build on the positive feelings on campus, we felt that NMU was a good match for the AQIP method of cooperation that focused on action projects and continual quality improvement.

Another reason for selecting AQIP was that Northern’s current president and her predecessor brought to the university strong leadership styles, vision, and a mission to improve the institution. Their emphasis on quality improvement, in addition to other factors, prompted university decision-makers to consider the AQIP process. For example, AQIP requires universities to isolate and pursue “action projects” at the conclusion of their Vital Focus self-study. Perhaps more importantly, though, AQIP requires yearly reporting on those action projects, and that keeps quality initiatives, with a focus on measurable improvement, on the front burner. The AQIP model is cyclical and requires routine contact with AQIP personnel and a yearly report. It also emphasizes regular campus-wide dialogue and work on action projects that fit NMU’s culture. Thus, the accreditation process and institutional improvement become an integral and regular part of institutional business rather than a hurdle to be cleared every ten years.

The AQIP model, by design, increases dialogue across the university campus, ensuring wider participation in decision making. It fits our recent emphasis on interdepartmental cooperation and cross-disciplinary majors, and it features a more proactive approach in that the focus is on building toward a stronger future rather than reporting reactively on the events of the past ten years. Its process seemed to fit the climate of activity that had developed in the university under the last two presidents, a climate that we wanted to institutionalize so that it was less dependent upon a strong president.

Thus, Northern began the exploration phase of the AQIP process. This included attendance at conferences and workshops, comparisons with traditional accreditation, an evaluation of the university's culture with regard to AQIP's goals, and a dialogue with our stakeholders about the decision to submit an admission application to AQIP. This experience alone was time-consuming and occasionally difficult because AQIP is, arguably, something of a moving target as requirements and guidelines shift and evolve over time. By the time we were ready to begin the application process, we had to settle on who would be responsible for drafting the document, gathering and condensing the information, revising the document, and dealing with the myriad other issues that arose prior to final submission.

Perhaps the most instructive, if not the most daunting, aspect of the AQIP process to date has been the self-evaluation through Vital Focus. The Constellation Index, a voluntary online questionnaire made available to all full-time and part-time employees, not only had to be designed around the specific needs of Northern Michigan University, but we also had to work on ways to publicize the index and motivate people to take it. Naturally, we learned a great deal during that experience. We could not have foreseen the unique problems that employees reported while attempting to complete the questionnaire, nor could we have guessed how individuals would react to some of the questions. The Constellation Index phase was quite valuable because the results yielded considerable information about the opinions and attitudes of employees, but the process itself did yield a variety of issues that, if addressed prior to the online availability of the questionnaire, would likely have streamlined the procedure. With a voluntary response rate of approximately 75 percent, we began preparing for Campus Conversation Day (CCD), expecting at least five or six hundred employees to gather to discuss the survey results.

Preparing for CCD was no small task. Given the expected numbers, we chose the NMU Superior Dome, our largest gathering place, as the venue and began the process of publicizing the event, scheduling activities, purchasing required supplies, closing the university for a day, and generally dealing with both union-related issues and the myriad glitches that accompany any undertaking so large in scale. When Campus Conversation Day arrived on November 1, 2002, we discovered that the day progressed very smoothly, due in large part to an excellent support staff and solid guidance from the AQIP facilitators who hosted the day. Still, there were surprises—and some strategies for success that worked better than others. The Vital Focus process, while fixed in some ways, is also quite fluid in other ways. Further, we were not sure what to expect when more than five hundred people awoke to find a fresh six inches of snow; but they nevertheless made their way to the dome. After door prizes were given, boxed lunches consumed, and provocative propositions written and read aloud, we stepped back to marvel at the logistics required for such an event.

The next task involved taking nearly eighty provocative propositions (broad recommendations on everything from improving communication, to implementing a customer training program, to reducing the parking fees, to advising our students better, and just about everything in between); reducing them to a vital few; and then turning them into AQIP's required action projects. This meant soliciting additional perspectives from stakeholders other than the immediate university personnel. The propositions were made available to students, faculty and staff, the board of trustees, alumni, parents of current students, community members, and a variety of others, all in an effort to find out just how closely the eighty provocative propositions echoed the concerns of others who had not been in attendance at Campus Conversation Day. The responses—some helpful, some hostile, and some hilarious—allowed the AQIP Steering Committee, in consultation with the administration, to settle on twelve potential action projects for the future and preparation for Northern's first Strategy Forum.

The journey from Interest Exploration to Strategy Forum was fascinating and instructive, frustrating and challenging—but always interesting. We likened it to childbirth. Had we known how difficult it was going to be, we might not have tried it. However, now that we're well into the first year and have a better understanding of the process, we like the results and think that the AQIP route to the next accreditation will focus the school on quality improvement in a positive way.

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Restructured Expectations for Two Community Colleges Based on the AQIP Journey

Robert Callaway, Marcia Ballinger, Jan Donley, and Ron Wright

Introduction

Preparing the campus for a long-term commitment to quality tied to accreditation is a challenging but rewarding journey. The navigation is made easier by The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP), which offers a map and a number of tools for moving the organization forward. The AQIP criteria and principles delineate the expectations for performance excellence. Ongoing self-assessment is critical to fostering a learning environment as well as a willingness to take risks and make mistakes on the journey. Two colleges have been on a performance excellence journey for some time now and have learned some essential lessons. Lorain County Community College and Cincinnati State Technical and Community College in Ohio have learned the importance of sharing experiences and learning from others. The purpose of this paper is to describe the essential elements in preparing, developing, and sustaining a culture of performance excellence through AQIP, along with its benefits and limitations.

Sustainability is critical for long-term success of quality efforts in higher education. Success is dependent upon "leaders accepting, understanding, and committing to quality and performance improvement as a way of life that is cohesive, comprehensive, and systematically integrated into the fabric of the organization" (Ricklefs, 2002).

In addition, the development of a culture that embraces performance excellence is essential to long-term success. Culture can be described as "the pattern of behaviors that members exhibit in conducting the central operations of the organization" (Rowley & Sherman, 2001). According to a 2002 futures study by the American Society of Quality, the role of the quality leader must shift from "doing quality for employees" to "coaching employees to do quality for themselves" (Case, 2002). Thus, performance excellence and quality efforts are the responsibility of everyone in the organization.

High-performance teams are essential for innovation and change in improvement efforts in education (Spanbauer, 1992; Sallis, 1994). The failure to adequately address people-related issues is the most important factor in explaining why any effort to create an environment that supports the human side of change fails (Canic & McCarthy, 2000). Sallis (1994) suggests two major approaches to preparing a quality framework for higher education. The first is "procedural," using an accountability model that ensures that standards are demonstrated and maintained as a result of process improvement efforts. The second is "transformational," which is concerned with empowering students and staff by creating more effective relationships and a better learning environment. The use of cross-functional and self-directed teams will continue to increase and can serve as a strategy for more stewardship of organizational resources. Creating high-performance teams is a catalyst for impacting service and social responsibility in a rapidly changing world.

Institutional Context

Lorain County Community College (LCCC) was granted a charter to serve Lorain County's educational needs on July 15, 1963. The 252-acre campus has fifteen buildings and is located approximately twenty-five miles west of Cleveland, Ohio. Today, LCCC is a comprehensive open enrollment community college with eight academic divisions, sixty credit programs and majors, thirty-one applied associate degrees in career/technical fields, thirteen certificates of proficiency programs, and numerous short-term training programs.

During the 2002 fall term, LCCC served approximately 9,096 students (headcount) in credit classes and an additional 4,000-plus students in non-credit continuing education programs. The student demographics include men (34 percent) and women (66 percent); day (70 percent) and evening (30 percent); full-time (37 percent) and part-time (63 percent); and Caucasian (82 percent), African American (8 percent), Hispanic (7 percent), and other/unknown (3 percent).

Under the presidency of Dr. Roy A. Church, which began in 1987, a new philosophical approach was introduced that moved LCCC to

- Become vision driven and base its mission and goals on the needs and aspirations of the community
- Flatten the organizational structure to ensure that there would not be more than two layers between the president and the operation
- Invest in leadership and professional development
- Commit to a continuous quality improvement ethos
- Promote participatory decision making to tap the passion, commitment, and creativity of people throughout campus

Also, since Dr. Church's arrival, LCCC has engaged in two strategic planning processes that ensure that the institution is continuously improving to meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders. The initial strategic planning process—Vision 2000—was conducted during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

One of the most significant accomplishments from Vision 2000 was the creation of Ohio's first university partnership program to bring bachelor's and master's degree programs to Lorain County. Research from the 1990 census revealed that Lorain County's educational attainment level at the bachelor's degree for adults twenty-five and older lagged the region's average by 12 percent. Without access to a public university in Lorain County, residents did not have convenient access to four-year and professional degrees. Utilizing a community summit model, LCCC convened three public summits and presented participants with research to assess. Following their recommendations, the college pursued additional funding through a new tax, which was approved by voters in 1995. By 1994–1995, LCCC had completed 85 percent of the initiatives.

The second strategic planning process—Vision 21—began in 1996 and included input from more than eight hundred external stakeholders and the majority of the college's board members, faculty, staff, and administrators. In addition, students were involved in various parts of the process. Vision 21 resulted in the revision of the mission and development of a vision statement, five core values, six strategic priorities, and thirty-eight strategic initiatives.

Some of the innovative endeavors at LCCC include the Great Lakes Innovation and Development Enterprise (GLIDE) program, the Spitzer Conference Center, the first distance learning nursing degree program with another community college—Terra Community College—and the Learning Center at St. Joseph Community Center where citizens in the city of Lorain can pursue their educational endeavors close to home.

Cincinnati State Technical and Community College is a public two-year college with three campus sites serving students in the Greater Cincinnati area of Southwest Ohio. During the 2002 fall term, the college served 7,539 students (headcount) in credit classes. Non-credit students raise the enrollment number to more than 10,000. The college was founded as a technical college in 1966 and has a strong history of blending theory and practice through interactive instruction combined with cooperative education. The college offers seventy-one associate degree programs in applied science and applied business and forty-seven certificate programs. About 72 percent of the student population participates in these technical programs. In 1994, the college became a community and technical college. Associate degrees in the arts and sciences provide a foundation for transfer to baccalaureate programs for the remaining students. The college requires students to participate in cooperative education, clinical experience, or internship as part of the curriculum for every associate degree. Employer advisory groups provide leadership and direction to curriculum improvements.

Cincinnati State is unique in Ohio in having five terms a year with forty-five days per term and year-round enrollment. Fifty-seven percent of the student population is over twenty-three years of age, with 72 percent of students attending during the day and 28 percent attending in the evening. Demographics include full-time (40 percent) and part-time (60 percent); male (42 percent) and female (58 percent); Caucasian (63 percent), African American (27 percent), Hispanic (1 percent), and other/unknown (9 percent). Overall growth in enrollment for the last five years is 25 percent, with tuition costs per credit hour remaining at \$62.50 per credit hour from 1997 to 2001, except for 2000 when tuition was lowered to \$59.00 per credit hour. A \$55 million advanced technology and learning center will open in 2004, along with a second seven hundred-space parking garage. Cincinnati State has a long history of key partnerships with the community to promote elevating professional and technical skills in the workforce. Change generated from fast turnaround of terms, increases in enrollment, and financial challenges has required attention to quality.

With a change in leadership in 1997, President Wright renewed the college's dedication to incorporating quality into decision-making and operational processes, and the college was prepared for taking a serious look at the AQIP model. Joining AQIP was a logical next step to promote the college's community-oriented vision and mission, assist the college in preparing for ongoing growth and change, and engage the college community in building a diverse learning organization.

Both institutions have clearly defined their visions, missions, values, and strategic initiatives. This alignment is essential to an effective AQIP process (Table 1).

Table 1

	Cincinnati State	Lorain County
Vision	Encourages all students to develop and achieve in reaching career and personal goals and provides access to educational resources, offers alternative learning technologies, and employs innovative methods in a multi-cultural environment	Enrich lives by creating gateways to educational, economic, cultural, technological, and personal growth
Mission	Cincinnati State is an affordable, open-access, public institution that responds to the educational needs of the community by offering quality technical, general education, training, and academic transfer courses; provides a learning environment that values cultural diversity and a curriculum that blends theory and practice; contributes to the economic development of the tri-state region; and fosters lifelong learning for its citizens.	Lorain County Community College, a dynamic leader, serves a culturally diverse community by promoting education, economic, cultural, and community development. The College encourages lifelong learning through accessible and affordable academic, career-oriented, and continuing education
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A quality education experience ○ A diverse college community ○ Strong tradition of technical and cooperative education ○ Experiential learning ○ Meets the changing needs of community ○ Service that exceeds expectations ○ Personal and professional growth ○ Cutting-edge technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Excellence in teaching and learning ○ Individual development ○ Ongoing assessment of effectiveness ○ Diversity and community ○ Community responsibility and stewardship
Strategic Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve access ○ Enhance educational design and delivery ○ Improve organizational effectiveness ○ Increase technology ○ Expand community partnerships ○ Utilize quality management strategies and tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Raise the community's technological competencies ○ Develop the whole person ○ Advance creative learning: any time, any place ○ Stimulate workforce and economic development ○ Promote community collaboration and growth ○ Build the College's infrastructure to accomplish these priorities
WWW	<www.cincinnati.state.edu>	<www.lorainccc.edu>

Strategies to Prepare and Organize for Entrance into AQIP

Both institutions established internal AQIP strategy teams to provide leadership, foresight, and the integrity of the process and to ensure that the focus remains consistent with their missions, visions, and values. Each institution identified a faculty member to provide the leadership to coordinate this endeavor. Other members of this strategy team include key leaders from faculty, staff, and administration. Both institutions have an Office of Institutional/Organizational Effectiveness to provide organizational support, along with budgets established specifically to support AQIP initiatives. In addition, these offices ensure that AQIP initiatives align and link with other institutional processes and systems. Other examples of strategies used by both colleges include the following.

◆ Prepare

- Attend Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting
- Establish a steering committee to research and examine the benefits and constraints of participating in AQIP

- Host campus-wide open sessions to educate and build consensus
- Select a faculty leader to organize and coordinate the AQIP project
- Attend AQIP information sessions
- Educate the president and board of trustees
- Sign an agreement with AQIP
- ◇ **Organize**
 - Select an external assessment tool such as the Ohio Award for Excellence (OAE) Quality Award Program
 - Form an assessment team for writing the Ohio Award for Excellence application
 - Develop continuous communication to the campus community
 - Prepare internal newsletter discussing AQIP
 - Attend meetings
 - Host campus-wide information sessions for students, faculty, staff, part-time employees, and administrators
 - Send email and voice mail messages
 - Create intranet Web sites for AQIP project design teams
 - Post Ohio Award for Excellence site visit
 - Form internal AQIP strategy team
 - Review OAE feedback report
 - Prepare for AQIP strategy forum
 - Post AQIP Strategy Forum
 - Develop three to four action projects
 - Communicate action projects to campus community
 - Have AQIP strategy team address other AQIP requirements
- ◇ **Structure**
 - Vice president for learner services and chief academic officer and vice president for strategic and institutional development
 - Director for the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
 - AQIP coordinator and chairpersons
 - AQIP strategy team
 - Three or four AQIP action project design teams
 - Expanded president's cabinet to include collective bargaining leaders
 - Establishment of president's quality council for oversight and integration of quality initiatives
 - Addition of AQIP as a regular agenda item at board of trustees meetings

Strategies to Develop and Maintain a Culture of Continuous Improvement

While each institution has taken a slightly different approach to organizing and operating its continuous improvement program, there are several common tenets. For example, leaders in both colleges demonstrate a quality-driven presidential philosophy and commitment. Both colleges exemplify an institutional value of ongoing assessment of effectiveness; and both have a number of

committees and councils to oversee the implementation of quality initiatives and continuous improvement. Both colleges have well-deployed research and planning offices that use data to drive decision making. Each college has made significant effort to improve communication to stakeholders. An organizational structure is in place to support continuous improvement efforts at both institutions. Professional development activities support the commitment to continuous improvement efforts.

However, the most salient tenet appears to be that each institution is flexible and agile enough to develop and sustain a culture for continuous improvement. Some examples of specific strategies used by the two colleges to sustain cultures of continuous improvement include the following.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workflow studies of workflow processes affecting students ○ Process improvement solutions phase after workflow mapping ○ Procedures defined for forming quality teams ○ Training for leaders and facilitators in quality tools and techniques ○ Revised institutional goal setting and planning process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leadership retreats for senior leaders ○ Culture assessment inventory and feedback process ○ Focus on development of high-performance teams ○ Performance-based pay for administrators linked to institutional goals ○ CQIN participant in Continuous Improvement Strategies/Learning ○ Quality award examiners trained |
|---|--|

Benefits and Challenges Experienced During the AQIP Journey

Overall, while both institutions used similar yet different approaches, several themes emerged related to the benefits and limitations of the AQIP journey. For example, both colleges agree that one of the major benefits is infusing the accreditation process into daily work processes and systems. On the other hand, both institutions believe that one of the biggest challenges is sustaining momentum for this continuous journey. Other specific examples are listed below:

Benefits

- Culture of performance excellence and continuous improvement
- Achievement of the college's mission, vision, and values
- Infusing the accreditation process into the normal and daily work processes and systems
- Emphasis on helping students learn
- Emphasis on systems, processes, data, and information
- Continuous dialogue around institutional priorities, processes, and systems
- All employees and student groups are part of the performance excellence journey

Limitations

- Sustaining the momentum
- Overcoming resistance to change—faculty, administrators, and staff
- Personnel changes—more dramatic if the change is in a key leadership position
- Impending budget cuts by state legislators

Concluding Thoughts

Preparing a community college campus for a long-term commitment to performance excellence aligned with accreditation is a challenging and worthwhile journey that will require leadership and accountability. Both institutions realize the importance of sharing best practices across work sectors and engaging in memberships in professional organizations that bring new ideas into the institution on an ongoing basis. Both institutions have been recognized as leaders in quality and have received recognition as award winners in the state quality award program, the Ohio Award for Excellence. However, both institutions recognize that creating a culture

of continuous improvement and quality begins with each and every individual making a commitment to make a difference for the students, staff, and community.

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Building the University Brand from the Inside-Out: The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) and Its Implications

Lawrence V. Gould, Tonja L. Vallin, Robert F. Scott, and Chris Crawford

Challenging Times: When Marketing Matters

The recent crisis in the ability of state governments to sustain even their already diminished role as providers of general fund support of public universities, colleges, and technical schools has only served to emphasize what many institutional leaders and academic researchers have come to realize over the last twenty-five years—higher education marketing can make a difference. As Zemsky, Shaman, and Shapiro (2001, p. 9) observe with great precision: “how well an institution understands the workings of the market for postsecondary education—technically, rather than metaphorically—and its place in that market increasingly determines that institution’s capacity to earn the revenue it needs to shape its own future.” As students, both traditional and nontraditional, have been forced to pick up an increasing share of the costs of higher education, they in turn pose a simple question, what are we getting for our money? It is this shopper’s mentality that has transformed postsecondary education into a competitive industry in which marketing, especially integrated marketing, has become an essential part of what universities and colleges must do to meet today’s challenging academic arena. Although not an entirely new activity for institutions of higher education, marketing has achieved greater acceptability and evolved into something much more than just promotion defined as recruiting students, public relations, publications, open houses, and tactical advertising initiatives. At the very least, marketing is also about building alumni loyalty, fundraising, recruiting and retaining great faculty and staff, managing organizational partnerships, and using image to create long-lasting and beneficial relationships with internal and external parties. Today, faculty and staff have a much more tolerant view of marketing’s place in the life of an institution than they did fifteen years ago. Marketing can even be a powerful change agent in higher education if used properly. At the same time, let’s not fool ourselves. It remains clear that any institution-wide marketing effort designed to meet growing competition will still face multiple points of resistance in an academic culture. For some faculty and institutional leaders, marketing is a distasteful activity adopted from the for-profit world of business. Yet, an expanded definition of *marketing* known as *integrated marketing* seems to have gained a degree of respect not afforded the more conventional usage of the term.

Integrated Marketing: The Essential Elements

How is integrated marketing different from marketing defined primarily as promotion? According to Bob Sevier (2001, pp. 103–104), an integrated marketing approach will look outward from the institution toward new partnering opportunities, new customers, and a changing marketplace; maintain a focus on strategic solutions; integrate the assets of the organization with consistent and coordinated messages; listen carefully to the learner/consumer; and depend heavily on research, database management, and continuous improvement. The emphasis on the coordination and integration of messages with learners and other consumers from “prospect to enrolled student” produces a derivative of integrated marketing known as “integrated marketing communications (IMC).” What makes IMC especially different from more traditional marketing is that it requires not only an external strategy, but also an internal set of initiatives with a focus on brand- and mission-reinforcing messages delivered throughout the campus during customer service training, faculty and staff orientation activities, and employee recognition and incentive programs.

Integrated Marketing Communications: Branding, Direct Marketing, and Learner Relationship Management (LRM/Customer Service)

Sevier's definition of IMC is perhaps one of the most powerful and useful constructs in the literature on integrated marketing for universities and colleges. He suggests that IMC, as a subset of the larger marketing process, "focuses more completely on the promotion and communication aspects of integrated marketing and is defined as a comprehensive, coordinated, institution wide effort to communicate mission-critical values and messages in ways that target audiences notice, understand, and respond to. IMC stresses data-driven segmentation, message integration, and evaluation" (Sevier 2002b, p. 16). Dave Damrow elaborates on this definition when he explains that IMC consists of three components that in many ways redefine the traditional admissions marketing funnel that is supposed to track a student from the prospect pool to matriculation. Damrow (2002, p. 5) identifies the three components as brand marketing, direct marketing, and customer relationship management (CRM). The following visual is an adaptation and modification of the original IMC graphic used by Stamats Communications, Inc. This adaptation continues to depict IMC as a holistic and connected flow of marketing communications, but illustrates more accurately that managing the relationship with the consumer/learner occurs throughout the process and even beyond matriculation and graduation. The touch points or interactions that the customer has with the organizational culture and brand every step of the way must be managed. Thus, CRM/LRM becomes not just another component, but a *context* for building the brand, implementing direct marketing tactics, and a getting return on investment through service quality and lifelong customer satisfaction. This last point will be reemphasized when the implications of AQIP are discussed later in the paper.

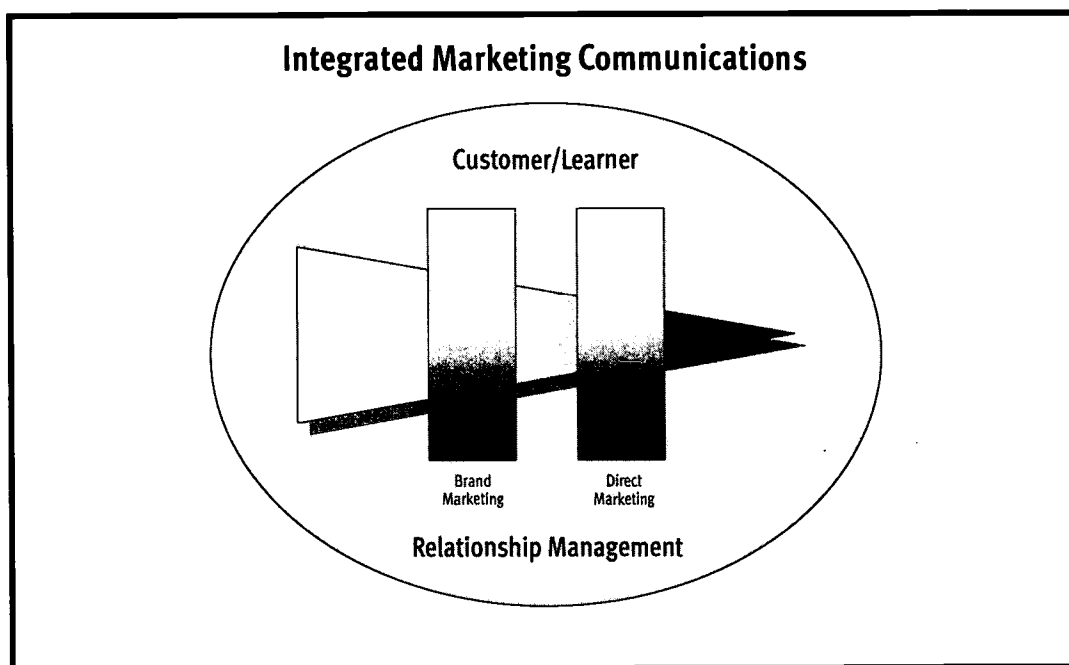


Figure 1. A Modified Admissions Marketing Funnel

The first component, brand marketing, has caught the attention of the academic marketing community in recent times and is intended to produce a perception or change of perception that differentiates an institution from its competitors and enhances an understanding of the "promise" inherent in the brand. Its purpose is to elicit an emotional response from those who are potentially interested in an institution. Once a perception has been established or, more importantly, the prospective customers have the institution within their "choice-set," communication moves to the direct marketing component. This component can best be defined as an interactive communication and contact program that uses brochures, email, advertising, direct mail, interactive media, and other more traditional forms of messaging to move the interested party from prospect to applicant. Although the original Stamats graphic used by Damon depicts customer/learner relationship management as a third component to be employed as a retention tool after matriculation, it is clear that a high-quality brand management approach requires the infusion of customer service as a lifelong element that is part of the marketing initiative from branding through graduation and beyond.

The Essence of Brand-Driven Communications: An Analytical Look

What is a brand? Scott M. Davis defines it this way in *Brand Asset Management*:

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In part, a brand is a set of promises. It implies trust, consistency, and a defined set of expectations. The strongest brands in the world own a place in the consumer's mind, and when they are mentioned almost everyone thinks of the same things. 3M invokes innovation, Hallmark stands for caring, FedEx means guaranteed delivery... Conversely, certain words connect you back to certain brands. Family entertainment conjures up Disney... a brand differentiates products and services that appear similar in features, attributes, and possibly even benefits. Is Tide that much better than Surf? Is Starbucks that much better than Caribou Coffee? (Davis, 2002, pp. 3-4)

Thus, a brand is much more than a logo or tagline. It's something that you can trust in terms of quality, service, safety, reliability, price, and so on. As noted earlier, the core of a brand is the promise that is made and kept by the brand's owner. At the essence of a brand-driven business is learning how to transcend the tangible aspects of a commodity, product, or service and create a deeper and more enduring relationship with the customer/learner. The brand creates a set of expectations that, if not met, diminish the brand promise and the consumer's emotional attachment to the organization, product, or service. But brands are not built on differentiation alone. Real brands include an element of superiority, or simply doing it better than your competition. In fact, if you can't differentiate, the moment of truth is likely to be when you do it better. This is especially true for institutions that are more likely to be "mass providers" and not pure brands like a Harvard.

A listing of brand benefits could be almost endless. Here are a few of the more important. An effective brand allows for premium pricing. A university with brand equity can raise tuition with less worry about how it compares to the competition. With brand power, when you launch a new academic program, there is an implied endorsement of quality. When you recruit new faculty, you are more likely to attract those who know about your promise to deliver the best honors programming in the country. Perhaps most important is the "buzz" generated by a loyal graduate who will tell others about the outstanding academic experience provided by your college. It is crucial to recognize that you don't brand just to recruit. Brands are assets that if managed properly can be leveraged over and over to add value to an already successful institution of higher education. Simply put, brand equity is an asset that, if properly managed, is better than money in the bank for an aspiring university or college. If nothing else, brand equity means your direct marketing tactics (the materials and messages that you use to cause a consumer to choose you) will be more effective and won't have to work as hard in the search for prospective learners, donors, and outstanding faculty.

What does it mean to build and manage a brand? In *Building a Brand That Matters* (2002b), Bob Sevier has popularized a four-element brand leadership strategy that is designed to establish both brand awareness and relevance. In the author's own words, the originator of an effective brand must:

- *First, make a promise that matters.* The key is to develop a promise that your internal stakeholders will support and external target audiences recognize, value, and show a willingness to pay for.
- *Second, communicate your promise to your target audiences.* This involves creating segmented messages that your target audiences notice, find relevant, and respond to... Communicating your promise also involves issues related to look, logo and a graphic identity system.
- *Third, live your promise.* At its most basic, this means delivering on, or keeping, the promise you made and communicated.
- *Finally, strengthen your promise.* This involves asking both satisfied and unsatisfied customers, "How'd we do? Did we live up to our promises? Did our messages make sense?" Strengthening your promise involves using outcomes research to modify the original brand promise, thereby keeping it vibrant, current, and focused. (Sevier, 2002b, p. 56)

Internal Branding: Don't Make a Promise You Can't Keep

Although there has been a paradigm shift in recent years toward a more complex understanding of brand marketing, there is still a tendency to use brand building and management strategies that concentrate primarily on listening to signals supplied by the marketplace external to an organization, advertising tactics (remember Wendy's famous dictum, "Where's the beef?"), and imagery. Make no mistake about it, a failure to conduct research on customer/learner needs and tuning out stakeholder feedback can be fatal for any brand. The marketplace will recognize that you do not have your act together when it comes to "living" your brand promise. At the same time, building a brand-driven business today is equally about *internal branding* and the avoidance of making a promise you can't keep (Davis & Dunn, 2002). Living and strengthening your brand promise depends as much on delivery as it does on understanding the expectations of target audiences. Internal branding defined in terms of (1) operations, (2) communications, and (3) enhancing the experience associated with the brand are the three ways in which an organization builds a brand from the inside-out. There is no promise worth making if you can't deliver, because poor delivery diminishes the trust level between brand and consumer quicker than any other factor. What happens inside your institution with regard to its operations and culture has far-reaching implications for *deriving* and *driving* a promise that matters. Walk the talk, living the brand, bringing your brand to life, and reinforcing customer touch-points are all shorthand for saying that you ignore with great peril the contributions that faculty, staff, and your organizational culture have on brand-building and brand stewardship (Sevier 2002b, p. 116). A brand is more than a marketing tool.

It is a core organizing principle for the internal operations and execution capabilities of an institution of higher education.

The three elements of internal branding are not mutually exclusive, and they originate in educated, motivated people who want to make the brand promise come alive for students, donors, and other consumers of your institution's value. This only makes sense. If branding is about emotional appeal and the creation of meaning for people, it follows that people within your institution—who believe in and are passionate about your institution's brand promise—hold ultimate responsibility for the creation and delivery of that meaning. Let's take a more detailed look at each of the elements that help define internal branding.

- ◇ *First*, internal branding and building the brand from the inside-out depend on an organization with effective and efficient operations. Put another way, how do you win in a “new brand world”? You win by execution and operational innovation (Hammer, 2001). If you view your institution as a system, a constellation of processes, with the function of producing quality outcomes for your clients, you'd better know something about flow charting and reengineering. Institutions of higher education are notoriously weak when it comes to organizing work processes (initial inquiries, admissions, advising, financial assistance, billing, payment, book ordering, etc.) for the convenience of the learner as opposed to the convenience of faculty and staff. Brand must become a basis for operations. Operations as one element of internal branding is focused on helping you derive the brand more than anything else. If you're going to make a promise that matters, you've got to have something to promise.

Efficient and effective operations are important in another way. As the saying goes, “if you can, be first. If you can't be first, be better” (Marconi, 1999, p. 225). High-quality operations allow you to *push* the core value(s) of your brand on to the consumer. To create a competition based on superiority, not necessarily differentiation. For example, most small public institutions of higher education claim to have user-friendly environments with personalized enrollment and academic advising carried out by professors and not a central advising office. The key is to rethink your operations in a way that will allow you to take this claim about convenience and friendliness to a level where you know, and your reputational capital tells prospective students, that you're living the promise better than any of your competitors.

- ◇ *Second*, internal branding is also about selling the brand inside by the use of integrated messaging and communications (Mitchell, 2002). The brand's central theme and its associated distinctive qualities should be in the hearts and minds of everyone in the organization. In many ways, the communication element of internal branding should create an almost spiritual bond between the organization and the people who work there. The old saying that branding occurs in the mind, not the marketplace is as true for your internal audience as it is for external targets. Organizations that embed brand knowledge through customer service training, faculty and staff orientations, email bulletins, management roundtables with employees, video or PowerPoint® presentations available on their intranets, and other carefully orchestrated internal marketing programs will not only build the brand from the inside-out, they will also leverage and extend the value of the brand to external marketing. Implicit in this statement is the understanding that internal and external branding and direct marketing must be linked. Alignment of leadership, marketplace, and internal stakeholders implies that all believe in the same thing. The bottom line is that every institution must establish a goal to create “brand evangelists” who understand the gospel!
- ◇ *Third*, it's crucial to build a brand that provides an experience that can surround your product, such as an academic program in higher education. Rather than simply pushing a brand out of the organization toward the external environment, good brands have a magnetism, a pulling element, that welcomes the learner back into the brand space. It's been called the “experience economy,” and once you've been able to create this memory for the student, you will also find you have created a community of “groupies” who will sell the brand to the world and beyond (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Small liberal arts schools like Oberlin or effective distance education providers like the University of Phoenix have been able to enhance their brand by surrounding it with experiences that inspire active participation by their graduates in the marketing process. Simply put, it's crucial when building the brand from the inside-out that you create strategies and use organizational assets that lead to a brand with both push and pull dynamics—in other words, a brand wrapped in an experience that produces lifelong memories. Again, this means bringing the brand alive for those inside your organization who will deliver the experience.

AQIP and Its Implications for Internal Branding

Since July 1999, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges (NCA) has been implementing an alternative regional institutional accreditation track known as AQIP. This alternative form of accreditation is in many ways a response to the ascendance of market forces and the call for increased accountability in the world of higher education discussed in the opening section of this paper. NCA recognized that its conventional form of accreditation involving compliance with minimum standards every ten years was not encouraging colleges and universities to adapt to the many changes facing them, including the need for improved competitive positioning, coordinated enrollment management, more responsive customer service, and better overall brand stewardship. By drawing on the principles and tools of the *quality movement*, NCA launched AQIP as a continuous regimen that would track and strengthen the effectiveness of the systems and processes used to support and accomplish key organizational initiatives and goals.

The hope is that AQIP will develop into more than just an alternative accreditation track. Its founders would like it to evolve into “a *network* of educators and colleges/universities interested in quality improvement as a tool for revitalizing higher education, a *group of innovative institutions* using the accreditation process to leverage the development of a “quality culture,” and a *research and development think tank* for inventing, discussing and testing new ways of driving change and improvement in higher education” (quotations from AQIP materials). Its **organizing logic** consists of four elements:

1. A focus on the effectiveness of the entire institution (not just academic affairs)
2. Clarification and improvement of the key processes of a college/university
3. Learner/customer relationship management
4. Management by measurement

Using the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and various state awards of excellence, the Higher Learning Commission has established **nine quality criteria** that institutions of higher education must consider in their efforts to achieve strategic change by transforming organizational culture. The AQIP quality criteria framework includes (1) understanding students and other stakeholders’ needs, (2) valuing people, (3) leading and communicating, (4) supporting institutional operations, (5) planning continuous improvement, (6) building collaborative relationships, (7) helping students learn, (8) accomplishing other distinctive objectives, and (9) measuring effectiveness. Each criterion is seen as a critical success factor in building an academic culture infused with the continuous quality improvement mindset. To set institutional goals and identify key performance indicators to measure goal achievement, the nine criteria are analyzed in terms of the following filters:

- The current context
- Processes for achievement
- Results/benchmarks
- Improvement strategies

As a leadership and management tool for developing institutional quality and meeting the imperative of accountability, AQIP holds great potential for creating high-performance institutions of higher education. More specifically, an increased focus on quality can have a tremendous impact on brand building and the use of branding in an institution’s integrated marketing efforts. Al and Laura Ries go so far as to make the “law of quality” one of their twenty-two immutable laws of branding (Ries & Ries, 1998).

☐ **Implication One: Making a Promise You Can Keep**

If brands are created by virtue of an institution’s academic programming, its values, and its organizational culture, AQIP’s continuous analytical approach can help an institution understand its vision, basic values, and purpose and whether a brand identity is really embedded in the internal culture. If you’re going to make a promise you can keep, it needs to find its origins in the hearts and minds of the people who will deliver and support the learning experiences surrounding the brand. If you claim to be the most user-friendly, convenient regional institution in the state, being that requires consistency of execution and operation across the institution. Does everyone in the organization feel responsible for high-quality execution on a daily basis? If not, you might be making a promise you can’t keep. AQIP’s imperative that institutions use various quality management awards and related tools to analyze context, existing processes, and results management can assist in evaluating whether your brand claim is a tangible asset or an empty promise.

☐ **Implication Two: Using AQIP to Communicate the Essentials of the Promise**

It’s been said that “while executives recognize the need to keep people informed about the company’s strategy and direction, few understand the need to *convince* employees of a brand’s power—they take it as a given” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 99). An effective internal branding initiative should provide a wide range of experiences that use as many touch points with the brand for employees as possible. Faculty and staff need to “touch and feel” the brand. If you really want to build the brand from the inside-out, you need to have as many brand evangelists as possible. Not only do you want to ensure that external communications are in line with the promise, but you also want to make certain that internal constituencies are hearing the brand gospel correctly. The “leading and communication” and “valuing people” quality criteria in the AQIP rubric can force attention to this crucial element of internal branding and IMC. Brands don’t get built overnight, and it takes consistent marketing communications and constant reinforcement to create a lasting brand relationship, even with your own faculty and staff. AQIP’s focus on process and continuous improvement help operationalize that understanding.

☐ **Implication Three: Using the Promise as an Internal Organizing Principle for AQIP Initiatives**

One of the most valuable ways in which a brand can be leveraged is to use it as basis for an institution’s operations and the experiences it creates to meet the consumer’s needs. For example, if you claim to be the most affordable institution in the state,

and one of your AQIP goals is to further that reputational capital, faculty and staff should pause everytime a tuition or fee decision is about to be made and ask: How does this affect the brand promise? One of AQIP's principles for high-performance organizations is *foresight*, or thinking into the future. The institution may send messages to students about its affordability, but do faculty and staff really understand that the brand should be the basis for operations and development of learning experiences (perhaps defined as affordable international internships?). In essence, a good brand should maintain, but also serve as a basis for *changing*, the organization.

☐ Implication Four: Using AQIP to Strengthen the Brand Promise

Davis and Dunn (2002, p. 24) remind us that “every time an employee gets to touch a customer or a customer gets to touch the brand, that company gets the opportunity to either reinforce its brand promise or totally denigrate it.” In other words, there’s plenty of room in any institution of higher education for influencing what students and stakeholders think about it. In fact, most students don’t complain about the content of an academic program (the product). Rather, they tend to complain about the experience surrounding the program or the service quality provided by the institution (academic advising, standing in the registrar or financial assistance offices, transferred to three different offices on the phone and still not getting an answer to a question). In fact, it’s been suggested that the usage of the term *customer service* in higher education is an oxymoron (Raisman, 2002). Again, it’s the people factor that can make a major difference in building and strengthening the brand promise. A number of AQIP criteria address the issue of how to strengthen the promise. Certainly, touch-point analysis goes to the heart of the “valuing people” quality criterion. You can either allow all those places where your institution and employees interact with learners and the marketplace control you, or you can control them with the goal of strengthening the brand promise. A simple AQIP initiative such as improved telephone etiquette can make an appreciable difference in how your institution is perceived by students and stakeholders. It could also make a difference in how employees treat each other and “live” the brand promise of the most personalized and friendly institution a student, parent, or an adult learner on a military base could choose. Operationalizing the AQIP “measuring effectiveness” criterion can not only help determine whether service quality initiatives are working; it can also enhance communication with students and internal branding efforts. Email surveys, focus groups, newsletters, and similar tools go a long way in communicating to students that they are important in building and strengthening reputational capital and the brand promise. Finally, it’s critical that institutional support processes enhance and do not detract from faculty and staff abilities to deliver on the brand. The AQIP emphasis on evaluating and improving institutional operations is another way in which a quality management approach can help in building the brand from the inside-out.

Online and Other Forms of Mediated Education: The Special Case of Branding at a Distance

In many ways, AQIP’s organizing logic and quality criteria apply just as emphatically to the distance education environment as to the on-campus world. It is important to recognize, however, that there are likely to be fewer touch points for students and stakeholders who do not visit or live on campus every day. They can’t eat the food (maybe that’s good), drop by the library, or participate in the pep rally before the football game. This lack of *quantity* in terms of touch points, however, is not inconsistent with AQIP’s philosophy of quality-driven education: focus on the quality of the educational *experience, even more so when the number of experiences is limited*. You don’t get as many chances to deliver on the brand promise with distance education. Thus, the few opportunities you have to interact with the student and the marketplace better be positive. If your brand identity is academic excellence, affordability, and individual attention on campus, you may need to communicate that promise to the distance education student in special ways. Perhaps the most valuable impact of AQIP in trying to brand at a distance is timing, or when you decide to adopt AQIP as a management tool. Brands need opportunities to be created and communicated. The arrival of a new president or other leader on campus presents one of those occasions. The adoption of a major change in management strategy such as AQIP presents another opportunity. This is the time to revamp processes and procedures associated with the delivery of distance education, and it’s also the time to deepen the meaning of the brand to anyone who doubts that service quality, for example, is important. On-brand behavior must become intuitive and rewarded just as much, if not more, in the distance learning environment. AQIP can become the “excuse” to make it happen.

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Implementing AQIP: Engaging the Campus

Robert McCue, Sheila Stearns, and David Fuller

Background

Wayne State College (WSC) was founded in 1891 as the privately operated Nebraska Normal College at Wayne. In 1909, the Nebraska State Legislature purchased the college and renamed it the State Normal College. In 1921, the college became a State Normal School and Teacher's College with legal authority to grant baccalaureate degrees in education. The name was changed to Nebraska State Teachers College at Wayne in 1949 when the state legislature granted authority to confer baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts. A graduate program leading to a master's degree was authorized in 1955, and in 1963 the name was changed to Wayne State College. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Wayne State College built upon its tradition as a teacher's college by developing and expanding academic programs in business and the arts and sciences. During the 1990s the college evolved into an undergraduate institution offering a comprehensive curriculum with equal emphasis on the arts and sciences, business, and teacher education.

Wayne State College applied for and was accepted into the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) in October 2000. During a retreat in February 2001 a cross-section of the campus conducted a preliminary self-assessment and identified the Vital Few areas the college would address in the initial phase of the project. The Vital Few areas are

- Human resource development
- Building community
- Institutional quality—connected learning opportunities
- Enrollment growth

In June 2001 a team from Wayne State attended one of the AQIP Strategy Forums and began to discuss ways to engage the entire campus in the AQIP process. As a result of those discussions the opening faculty and staff meetings in August 2001, which were normally separate meetings, were combined and modified. The more than four hundred members of the faculty and staff were combined into one meeting and assigned to tables in groups of six to eight to discuss quality improvement ideas. The groups were carefully constructed so that each included staff, faculty, and administrators. AQIP council members acted as facilitators for the different groups of tables. Each group of tables was assigned one AQIP quality criterion for discussion. Everyone was given their assigned quality criterion in advance so they had time to think about it before the meeting. Various techniques were used to reach group consensus on potential projects. Many of those techniques were demonstrated at the AQIP strategy forum the previous summer. The meeting assessment was very positive, with many faculty and staff commenting on different aspects they liked. Information about the opening meeting is posted at <http://www.wsc.edu/academic/aqip>. A year-end meeting to celebrate successes and quality improvements was planned for April 2002. The WSC presentation this year begins with a description of the results and activities connected to that year-end meeting in April 2002.

The Proceedings and Campus Involvement: Spring 2002

The "Proceedings Project" was initially developed to highlight annual progress on AQIP initiatives for the campus community. It grew into an important tool to familiarize the entire campus community with the AQIP Quality Criteria and it also provided a way to celebrate and recognize individual efforts toward quality improvement. The project was implemented as a part of the campus year-end meeting to reflect on the academic year and to acknowledge the good work and efforts of faculty and staff in meeting quality objectives and strategic goals.

At the opening meeting, faculty, professional staff, and support staff met and worked together to identify ideas and projects to improve the quality of programs and services at Wayne State College. In mid-March, the WSC president sent a letter to everyone on campus announcing the end-of-year meeting in April. Included in the letter was an invitation to all faculty and staff to prepare brief descriptions of special initiatives undertaken to improve the quality of the college and to contribute to AQIP goals. Faculty and staff were

encouraged, whether they had coordinated a large quality improvement project or a small one, to consider describing it and sharing the results with the rest of the campus. The letter also included a simple one-page reporting form, some examples of completed forms for current projects, and a description of the AQIP Quality Criteria. See the documents at http://www.wsc.edu/academic/aqip/annual_activities/2001_02/main.html. Using this report format highlighted the AQIP Quality Criteria and caused people to think about what they were doing and how it related to AQIP.

There was a great response, with more than 150 reports from all sectors of the campus. These unedited reports form the bulk of the proceedings document that was distributed at the meeting. In addition twenty projects were selected for poster displays featured at the closing meeting. Faculty and staff had the opportunity to visit with the poster presenters before and after the meeting. The net effect was an increase in the visibility of AQIP, enhanced cross-campus communication, and an increased appreciation of all the quality improvement efforts in progress. Several faculty and staff members commented on the positive nature of the meeting and how much they enjoyed hearing about what others on campus were doing to improve the quality of Wayne State College.

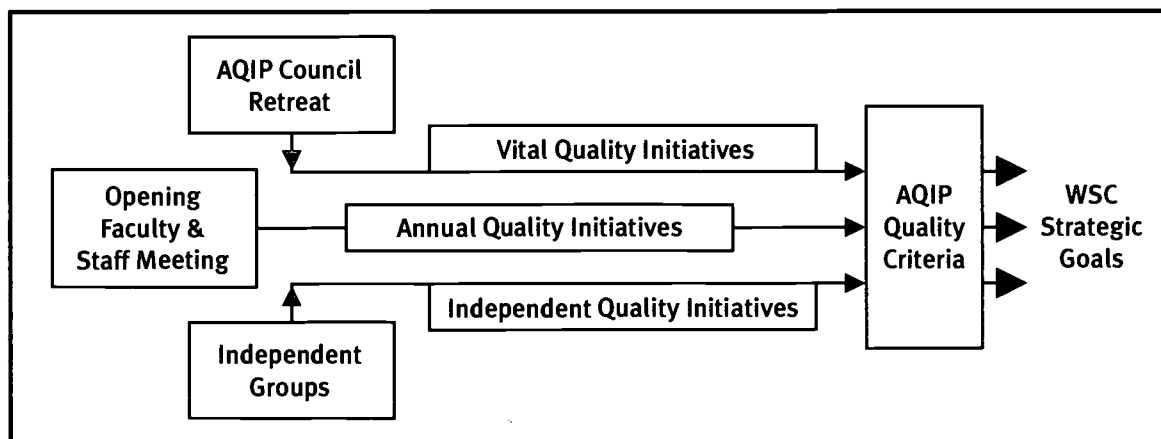
Summer Planning for the Second Year of AQIP

A review of AQIP activities and processes during summer 2002 was a critical step in the entire AQIP effort. The review helped clarify how AQIP cycles fit into campus cycles for strategic planning, budget planning, assessment, and other campus initiatives. The review also clarified other key issues, including: AQIP council responsibilities, membership, method and term of appointment, an AQIP budget, and a timeline and deadlines for AQIP activities to 2009. Summer planning discussions resulted in modifications of campus-wide activities planned for the 2002–2003 academic year. The opening meeting was modified to focus more attention on the Vital Few instead of all nine quality criteria. The review process helped organize and describe an overview of the entire AQIP process on campus. Presentations about AQIP and Wayne State College were then made to various groups on and off campus. The groups to whom presentations were made included the president's council, the president's strategic planning retreat, the academic dean's retreat, the academic council, the AQIP council, the Nebraska Coordinating Commission, and other postsecondary institutions in Nebraska.

Engaging the Campus: Changes for Fall 2002

The process for campus involvement was changed based on the experiences of the first year of implementing AQIP and on the summer 2002 review. The first year was a success in many ways, with increased visibility of quality improvement activities, a better understanding of the process, and acceptance by the campus. However, the activities needed to be more focused on progress and the Vital Few. The processes developed during the first year did increase the visibility of quality initiatives, but at times it was difficult to track progress on specific goals. The following description and diagram represent the processes involved as the first year in AQIP progressed.

AQIP at WSC 2001–2002

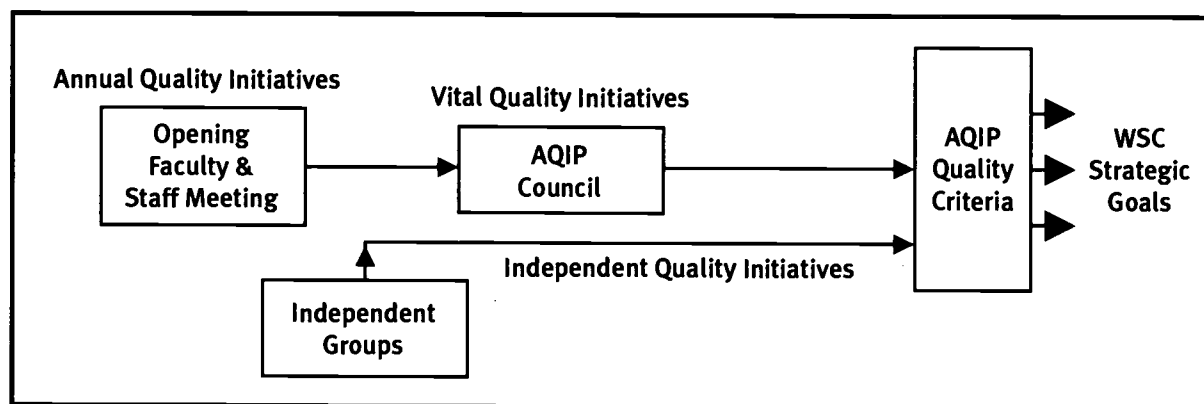


The processes depicted in this diagram developed as different phases of AQIP implementation occurred during the first year. The AQIP council retreat developed the Vital Few and Vital Quality Initiatives in February 2001. The Annual Quality Initiatives resulted from the opening faculty and staff meeting in August 2001; some were related to the Vital Few and some to other quality criteria. The Independent Quality Initiatives developed during the 2001–2002 academic year and were associated with all the AQIP quality criteria. All the initiatives were connected to the AQIP quality criteria and the WSC strategic goals, but the Vital Few sometimes lost their

significance as attention was focused on other initiatives. The number of activities was good for AQIP from a visibility point of view, but the whole process needed to be more focused on the Vital Few.

The task was to improve the process and focus on the Vital Few without reducing the enthusiasm for other initiatives. To do this the 2002–2003 opening meeting activities were modified in the following way. The meetings were split again into a staff meeting and a faculty meeting so that teams of people who work together could plan together. One problem with the first-year AQIP process was its reliance on volunteers to accomplish many of the projects. Inconsistent attendance and scheduling became problems on many projects that involved people from different sectors of the campus. Teams and team leaders were developed from existing work groups, offices, or departments to counteract this problem. These groups were asked to think about and develop action plans for annual quality initiatives in their areas that specifically related to the Vital Few. The opening meetings provided a time for discussion and consensus building. Follow-up reports on project details and progress were then provided to the AQIP council. Council members served as a resource and liaison to the teams for assistance and reporting. The diagram below indicates the realignment of opening meeting activities to focus more attention on the Vital Few.

AQIP at WSC 2002–2003



Summary

The new process focused attention on annual quality initiatives directly related to the Vital Few and resulted in quality teams made up of individuals who already work together. Both of these actions corrected problems encountered in the first year of AQIP implementation. The level of participation in the “Proceedings Project” enhanced the visibility of AQIP and quality improvement on campus and provided a unique way to recognize individual efforts to improve the campus. The summer review of AQIP clarified some organizational issues and led to some quality improvements in the process. One result was the inclusion of quality improvement and AQIP as a strategic theme in the most recent strategic plan for the college.

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Completing a Five-Year Strategic Plan While Incorporating AQIP

Laura Davis and Terry Kuhn

Purpose

All higher education organizations have either formal or informal planning processes. These processes tend to operate at each administrative level. This paper describes how Kent State University is combining its existing planning with AQIP processes. Associate Provost Davis is responsible for planning and academic resource management for the academic sector of the university, and Vice Provost Kuhn is director of continuous improvement. Representatives from institutions already committed to AQIP or whose institutions are considering the AQIP accreditation process should find aspects of this paper useful.

Introduction

Kent State University, a doctoral/research-extensive institution, consists of a large, diverse, residential campus and seven regional campuses. The Kent campus provides baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral study opportunities, while the seven regional campuses serve specific community needs with associate degree, continuing education, workforce development, and selected baccalaureate programs. Kent State offers a full range of academic programs with supportive strengths in focused research and service areas.

The total enrollment of more than 32,000 students includes 6,000 residential students and 26,000 commuter students who approach its campuses from nearby apartments and from cities including Akron, Cleveland, and Canton. More than 30,000 Kent State students are Ohio residents, and the remaining 2,000 come from forty-six states and thirty-three countries. There are 2,600 adult students and about 1,700 students who have transferred to Kent from other institutions of higher education. Sixty-one percent of our students are female, and 13 percent are students of color. Kent State's full-time faculty is 63 percent male and 13 percent faculty of color.

The culture of Kent State supports a robust faculty governance system and three employee unions. These bodies complement the administrative structure. The faculty senate deals primarily with curricular and university policy issues, while two faculty unions affiliated with the American Association of University Professors deal primarily with conditions of faculty employment. A third union represents the interests of clerical employees. These bodies have been effective in working with the administration on their respective responsibilities.

Kent State possesses characteristics of both traditional residential and innovative metropolitan institutions. With this degree of complexity in its institutional mission, how is Kent State combining its existing planning processes in academic affairs with its newly adopted AQIP expectations? Even with AQIP's ubiquitous systems approach, it is important to plan for the transition of institutional planning from its current state to the way it will work within AQIP expectations.

Kent State University was accepted into the AQIP accreditation process in September 2000 and has since been working to institutionalize continuous improvement. Major process changes relate to the implementation of the current strategic plan, annual reporting by departments and colleges, and resource allocation within the AQIP framework.

Previous Involvement with Continuous Improvement

Prior to its formal application to AQIP, Kent State had been involved with several institutional effectiveness initiatives. These efforts showed that a more formal and systemic approach toward continuous improvement was desirable, thus laying a foundation for AQIP. The first effort was the formation of Kent State University's Centennial Commission, followed by a cultural self-study and then a university-wide strategic planning effort.

The Centennial Commission, established in 1996, began an innovative process of testing and measuring the institution's plans in cooperation with external stakeholders, such as alumni and community leaders. The final report contained sections on academic

quality; student recruitment and retention; learning technologies; partnership and collaborations; and values, identity, and communications. The essence of the recommendations reflects the importance of the multiple aspects of the university mission, while still maintaining the value of student success as the central focus of the university's efforts.

The cultural self-study was an assessment designed to reveal the organization's underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values. The university secured the services of Cultural Research, Inc., to gather data and appointed an internal committee to make recommendations based on the findings. The key finding was that faculty and staff were highly committed to the academic mission of the university, but also felt a sense of fragmentation or disconnection from what was termed as the "operating" mission, defined as administrative activities that support the academic mission.

The university initiated a round of strategic planning in September 1998. Unlike previous strategic planning initiatives, this planning process included unit involvement across the university, the use of reports and other data to help guide strategic thinking, and open, two-way dialogue between the steering committee and all university units. To achieve these goals, existing university governance and communication structures solicited feedback and ideas from all units on all eight campuses. This resulted in the creation of nine general strategic planning principles, around which departments and divisions were to develop their strategic plans and report annual progress.

The outcomes of the Centennial Commission report, the cultural self-study and the university-wide strategic plan created a platform from which AQIP could be used to align its continuous improvement efforts. The Higher Learning Commission requires all institutions to demonstrate how they help students learn and how they address continuous improvement. These two factors were recognized as critical in all three of the major university improvement efforts. Using AQIP as a way to link our past initiatives was best described at the September 2001 internal planning conference by Provost Paul Gaston when he said:

We can now continue to focus on the issues and concerns most important to the university because our strategic initiatives and our accreditation responsibilities are linked in a meaningful way. The framework also provides us an opportunity to better hone our institutional measurement processes and subsequently fund our budgeting priorities. ...Our strategic directions continue to be our guiding planning principles, and the AQIP process will help us bridge the planning and budgeting processes by helping us determine important measures and effectiveness.

Academic Planning, Reporting, and Budgeting

The processes of academic planning, performance reporting, and budgeting are evolving as we adopt a continuous improvement model. Past practice had academic departments and colleges submit annual reports that emphasized tabulations of the previous year's accomplishments, such as numbers of majors, faculty publications, and external awards—rather than assessment of progress toward goals—along with a new set of priorities determined from the department-level perspective. Annual reports also contained itemized budget requests. The early fall budget request submission date, however, was not aligned with the state appropriation cycle or with the spring university allocations process. For institutional purposes, contents of the annual reports were culled for individual points of pride, but were not as useful for charting institutional, systemic progress, particularly as some college reports approached three inches in thickness.

Beginning with its five-year strategic plan, the university began to transform its planning, reporting, and budgeting processes. All divisions, colleges, departments, and campuses developed annual plans that served to implement the university's nine strategic directions. Goals became more cohesive, and collaboration across division lines emerged as a distinctive feature of university-wide strategic planning. At the same time, approaches to budgeting changed. Moved to early spring, budgeting was viewed within the context of the strategic plan and addressed in a series of public presentations. At the same time, measurement values began to be redefined. Reporting began evolving to assessing so that even against the backdrop of a state budget giveback, it was possible to gauge accomplishments that most directly advanced both the unit and university's strategic priorities; to begin feeding that information back into a loop of continuous improvement; and to look toward strategic areas of investment to support the long-term health of the institution.

In the current academic year, AQIP and strategic planning are merging. As the provost's introduction to the academic affairs annual plan notes: "Three broad action projects, developed through campus-wide consultations, signify the university's commitment to AQIP while offering a focused approach to the fourth year of the strategic plan." Even as department-level action projects, drafted during the university's comprehensive, inclusive entry assessment process, fed the development of the university action projects, department projects were revised in light of the first three Kent State University action projects submitted to the Higher Learning Commission. Our measurement approaches continue to mature as well. Previously, comments were added to a "progress" column in the implementation plan as activities were completed. This year, a "measures of success" column identifies indicators that will tell whether the plan is accomplishing its aim. Not only will progress be more clearly measured, but developing these indicators at the year's beginning also helped sharpen strategic objectives and implementation strategies.

Planning and assessment processes are also becoming more grounded in data. We are strengthening and improving information important to planning and assessment and working toward integrating it into our decision-making processes. Through these changes, budget planning is becoming both strategic and systemic. We have recognized that the condition of shrinking state support has become permanent. In that light, the university is pursuing self-determined, long-term progress by improving the efficiency and effectiveness with which it uses its resources and is using information and assessment to identify new institutional opportunities that align institutional mission and strengths with external stakeholder needs.

Conclusion

AQIP has opened a new avenue for Kent State to continue its organizational improvement efforts, and the amalgamation of planning processes with AQIP is already building institutional strength. Annual assessment of the three university action projects and of individual department action projects will be part of those processes. These changes are taking effort and support from faculty, staff, students, and administrators—stakeholders who perceive potential for making significant and positive changes in Kent State University's institutional culture through the process methodology embodied in the Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Project.

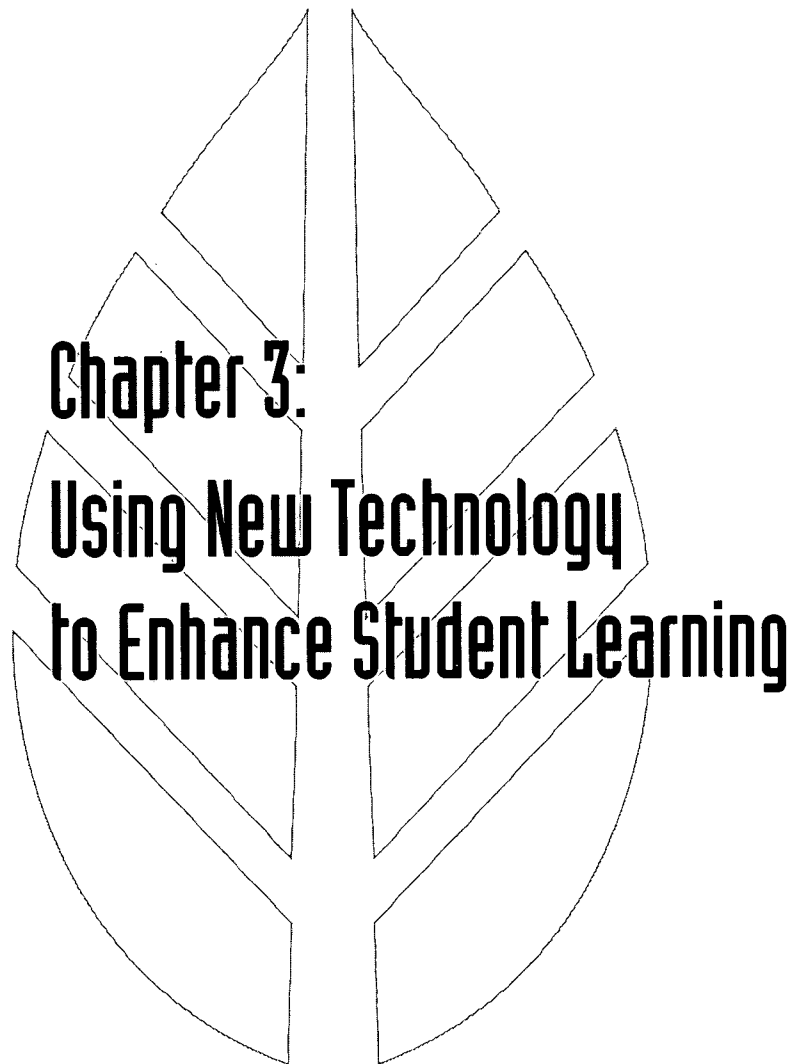
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A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement, 2003

Volume 2: Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions



Chapter 3: Using New Technology to Enhance Student Learning



Restructured Expectations: Building New Partnerships for Learning

Program of
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108th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association

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Assessment, Accreditation, and the Web: IUPUI's Electronic Institutional Portfolio

Trudy W. Banta and Susan Kahn

Background

Over the past five years, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has developed an extensive Web-based institutional portfolio. Begun as part of a three-year (1998–2001) grant project conducted in collaboration with five other large, complex urban universities, the portfolio is based on the same concept underlying individual student and faculty portfolios: authentic work samples are combined with self-evaluation and reflection to demonstrate and document progress and achievement. At IUPUI, the online portfolio has developed into a rich representation of our institution's work and accomplishment in mission-critical areas and has become an integral component of our institution's processes for planning, assessment, improvement, and accountability.

While the portfolio is intended for multiple audiences, in spring 2001 we proposed to the Higher Learning Commission that we develop our accreditation self-study entirely within the online portfolio as an experiment in incorporating technology more fully into the accreditation review process. We argued that use of the World Wide Web as a communications medium would allow us to make the self-study widely accessible to internal and external stakeholders; greatly expand the range of evidence and information that we could present; and allow for new, interactive ways of organizing and presenting that evidence and information. The portfolio/self-study was to be focused on two special emphases at the core of IUPUI's mission: teaching and learning, and civic engagement. The Commission's agreement to our proposal was the stimulus for intensive development of the sections of the portfolio corresponding to our special emphases over the year and a half leading up to our November 2002 accreditation visit.

The IUPUI Portfolio

From the outset, we worked to build a portfolio site that explicitly highlighted the relationships among mission, planning, assessment, and improvement. The linking capabilities of the Web enabled us to make these connections more visible than a conventional descriptive narrative might have done. More broadly, the use of menus, hyperlinks, drill-downs, and other features of the Web to connect and organize information, evidence, and examples stimulated new thinking about how various processes and parts of the university related to one another in actual practice. We found that any lack of alignment among mission, vision, values, practices, and outcomes became more visible as the structure of the portfolio developed. Collaboration among various groups, committees, and offices broadened perspectives on the institution and helped to break down organizational silos.

At IUPUI, for example, the process of developing the portfolio revealed areas where actual linkages and evidence were lacking, stimulated new assessment and improvement efforts to address these gaps, and ultimately brought greater coherence and cohesiveness to planning, assessment, and improvement processes. In effect, the portfolio served the purpose that self-studies are meant to serve—the development and examination of evidence of effectiveness in a way that contributes to clearer understanding of shared purposes and to real organizational development and learning.

Session Focuses

Our session at the 2003 meeting of the Higher Learning Commission is structured around several major questions. Here we provide the questions, along with very brief responses.

1. **What kinds of evidence and materials, especially related to student learning, are included in electronic institutional portfolios?**

Electronic institutional portfolios typically include a broad range of materials. What differentiates them from paper self-studies or other accountability documents is the emphasis on inclusion of authentic work—by individual students and faculty

as well as by units, such as schools, departments, administrative offices, and committees. The use of genuine work samples enables the institution to show, not just tell, what it actually does. In its electronic institutional portfolio, IUPUI includes student work in multiple media, much of it organized around our six principles of undergraduate learning; links to unit-wide annual assessment reports and planning and budgeting reports; statistical and financial data; information on achievement in relation to our key performance indicators; and narrative that interprets and reflects on the work of the institution. We also include several interactive query tools related to student learning and civic engagement and plan to develop more such tools in the future.

2. What have we discovered about good practices in developing electronic institutional portfolios?

Developing a complex Web site to represent the work and effectiveness of an entire institution is a daunting task. Fortunately, there are now a number of examples of electronic institutional portfolios and Web-based self-studies online, so no institution needs to start from scratch. We believe that starting small, with one or two specific focuses, is the most productive strategy. Have a clear audience (or set of audiences) in mind and ensure that all involved agree on the purposes of the portfolio. Engage an array of institutional constituencies if you intend the portfolio to be a vehicle for institutional learning and improvement—but ensure that a small set of individuals, well-versed in Web design best practices, has the responsibility for translating the ideas of these various constituencies into a Web site.

Make the site as easy to use as possible. At IUPUI, we incorporated navigational tools that allowed users to move easily from one part of the site to another, as well as other features like a search engine, a glossary of IUPUI acronyms, and a page containing links to other important IUPUI sites—all available from any page of the portfolio. The About the Portfolio section includes information on site organization and navigation and points to areas of the site that we especially hoped our accreditation team members would explore.

3. How can electronic institutional portfolios be designed to serve as accreditation self-studies?

Materials in the portfolio need to be explicitly related to the topics of the self-study and to the accomplishments and concerns of the institution in relation to these areas. At IUPUI, we incorporated a portal to the portfolio designed for Higher Learning Commission reviewers; from this portal, reviewers could access the various narrative sections of the self-study and other key materials. The narrative serves, in effect, as a pathway through the various items included in the portfolio and as the portfolio's reflective component. We also included our performance indicators, developed as part of our most recent strategic planning process, with information on our performance on each indicator, including the evidence we used to judge our performance and information on efforts underway to improve performance.

4. In what ways do electronic institutional portfolios respond to current and emerging emphases of accrediting bodies?

The focus of accreditation has evolved in recent years to emphasize student learning and attainment; electronic portfolios can present direct evidence of learning in multiple media and at various units of analysis, from the work of individual students through aggregated assessment results for an entire institution. Another strong emphasis of most accrediting bodies is continuous improvement. The ability to update an electronic portfolio Web site to show changes over time makes it ideal for demonstrating ongoing self-evaluation and improvement.

5. In what ways might electronic institutional portfolios stimulate wider campus participation in accreditation self-studies?

We drew on an array of committees and groups, under the guidance of a small leadership team, to collect materials and determine the structure and content of the portfolio. We found that as we began to develop content and place it on the portfolio Web site, then showed the site in various campus forums, many faculty and staff members were enthusiastic about contributing ideas and materials. People also expressed interest in reviewing and commenting on the site, in part, perhaps, because placing our self-study on the Web made it so public. Within the portfolio itself, we incorporated a Questions and Comments feature that allowed portfolio viewers to communicate with the portfolio development team. By the time our accreditation review team arrived, literally hundreds of faculty, staff, and students had at the very least accessed the portfolio and developed some familiarity with it.

6. How can electronic institutional portfolios catalyze more authentic, transformative institutional self-examination than traditional self-studies?

As noted above, a Web site, by its very nature, is accessible and public and can easily be made available to everyone on a campus for discussion and review. Perhaps because the electronic portfolio represented a new format for self-study, perhaps because it represented an experimental approach, or perhaps because its audience was not limited to our accreditation review team, we found that people on campus were excited about being involved in it. In addition, the structural properties of the Web in themselves tend to stimulate new perspectives. Finally, when institutional performance is graphically represented on a public Web site, members of that institution have a vested interest in being involved in evaluating and improving that performance.

The Accreditation Review Team's Response to the Portfolio/Self-Study

Our review team's response to IUPUI's Web portfolio was generally positive. In their draft report, team members noted that the ability to access and study campus materials at a distance, the use of links in the self-study text to support and illustrate key points, and the capacity to make efficient connections among related elements of the self-study were all valuable features. The report cited the accessibility of the portfolio, including the campus's performance indicators, on the Web as evidence of institutional integrity and commitment to the self-study process. It observed that the campus's work on the portfolio had developed a climate of collaboration to foster campus-wide progress toward fulfilling institutional mission.

The team found disadvantages as well—among them a sense that the lack of “boundaries” on the Web made it unclear to some team members exactly what was part of the self-study and what was not.

At this writing, we are awaiting our review team's final report. Once we receive it, we plan to send a brief questionnaire to individual team members to learn more about their responses to the self-study Web site. We will ask them about advantages and disadvantages of placing self-study materials on the Web, about the usefulness of various features of the site, and about their advice to other campuses developing Web-based self-studies. At our session at the 2003 Annual Meeting, we will report on team members' responses. In the meantime, we invite you to visit the IUPUI portfolio at <http://www.iport.iupui.edu>.

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Digital Institutional and Student Portfolios Demonstrating Success, Achievement, and Reflection

Neal W. Topp and Sheri Everts Rogers

Plan

Institution

The primary goal of the institutional digital portfolio was to demonstrate and communicate progress toward our campus strategic planning goals. It has also become a valuable way for us to collect and analyze documentation of our ongoing processes of self-improvement that harmonize with AQIP's (Academic Quality Improvement Project) processes and expectations. Part of our process of continuous self-assessment involves twice-yearly strategic planning advances (retreats). At each of these events the campus community comes together, reflecting upon past successes and planning for the future. These sessions identified the need to provide data to a larger audience, both internal and external: thus the portfolio is Internet accessible and easily found at our strategic plan site. Eventually, our institutional portfolio will include the process of student learning assessment on campus. Further, the portfolio provides an opportunity to assess and compare our achievement on a national level, as requested by our board of regents.

The director of assessment and the director of institutional research, in conjunction with the strategic planning steering committee, developed the institutional digital portfolio. The campus quality indicators were chosen following a national search of like indicators at other metropolitan and urban universities. The dean's forum chose the final indicators and is currently at work to add specific college measures for each of the institutional measures either already shared at the site or under development.

During the process of developing the portfolio, the director of assessment attended several training sessions about AQIP. These sessions illustrated the seemingly natural connection between the portfolios being developed to measure and communicate our progress, and this alternate route to continued accreditation. Campus leaders recently attended an AQIP leaders' seminar and are at work to define the appropriate self-assessment to begin the AQIP process.

Student Portfolio

The College of Education (COE) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) has developed a digital portfolio for all teacher candidates. The portfolio has been created using a database and is Internet accessible. It is systemic, allowing access to all of the teacher candidate's coursework and artifacts and has the capacity to allow students to add most types of media, including text entries, customized HTML pages, digital video, and PowerPoint® presentations. This allows a teacher candidate to include artifacts from any of coursework or other activities. At the same time, students can easily review and reflect on artifacts created earlier in their program of study. Pre-service teaching candidates can review and reflect on work from previous courses for inclusion in a summative portfolio.

The COE student portfolio design was a collaborative effort between staff, faculty, and administration. Originally started as part of UNO's PT³ project, "Preparing Teachers to Use Technology," and funded by U.S. Department of Education PT³ funds, the portfolio process began with an investigation of several types of digital portfolios. After initial meetings with the COE dean and several department chairs, a prototype was authored and a pilot was initiated. Since that initial pilot, several revisions and many additions have been implemented with the input of faculty and administration. The portfolio staff met with different groups of faculty on a monthly basis to discuss successes and challenges encountered as students and faculty used the portfolio. Faculty members have been encouraged to add new elements to the process to meet their course objectives.

Do

Institution The institutional portfolio was designed using the Urban University Portfolio Project as a model. As we designed our portfolio, we were presenting information to our board of regents regarding the quality indicators. As the selection process for our quality indicators began to take shape, the natural connection between the indicators and the goals of AQIP began to become obvious. The portfolio is an attempt to visually explain the connections within the portfolio, to communicate progress, and to make data-based decisions. All are specific to the goals our campus has set for itself. AQIP seems a perfect fit in that it allows us to continue to improve with our campus-specific goals and measures.

The strategic planning steering committee is currently addressing each of our quality indicators to ensure that all adequately measure our strategic planning goals. This committee is selected by the chancellor, who attends all meetings, and is chaired by a faculty member. The faculty senate, community members, students, administrators, staff, additional faculty, representatives from all of the vice chancellor's offices, and many additional representatives from groups within these groups are represented on the committee, which is charged with specific tasks each year and with planning for the campus strategic planning retreats.

Currently the committee is analyzing and evaluating the institutional digital portfolio to ensure appropriate measures, quality indicators, and adequate progress toward strategic planning goals. It is anticipated that the portfolio will be used to prepare the systems portfolio required for AQIP.

Student Portfolio The College of Education student portfolio is a central element in our NCATE assessment plan. It is designed to help measure a teacher candidate's progress toward meeting INTASC principles and ISTE standards, as well as other specific program standards. Students, instructors, and administrators can use the data in the portfolio. Since the portfolio is a database, numeric data can easily be calculated in any way that is useful.

Review

Institution As the quality indicators were selected, as befit the strategic plan, we adjusted existing measures, ended some, and added others. Currently we are meeting with each college to determine existing measures at the institutional level that would be helpful at the college or department level, and how to help the colleges and departments accomplish their goals within the strategic plan's goals. The student-learning assessment piece within the assessment office provided us with the link we needed to what was being developing independently in the College of Education. The student portfolio in the College of Education has been shared at several strategic planning retreats as a model of the direction our campus is heading with regard to student learning assessment. Since the first sharing of the portfolio at an assessment workshop, other departments and units have initiated plans to add artifacts to student portfolios or, in the case of the Department of English, to pilot a student portfolio from beginning composition courses that will eventually connect, for education majors, to the portfolio they do for the College of Education. The Communication Department already creates, and helps students evaluate, their videotaped speeches, which may be added to a digital student portfolio illustrating general education outcomes.

Student Portfolio The review process for the student portfolio has included input from COE students, faculty, and administration, with scheduled monthly meetings with several groups. Each semester, students are asked to evaluate their use of the portfolio and how improvement can be implemented. All of this continual input is very important to the success of the project, as one of the goals of the portfolio project is to have the assessment process be part of instruction, focusing on helping students learn and instructors teach. Modeling integrated assessment to our teacher candidates will help them better understand how authentic assessment can improve learning.

In addition to continual internal reviews and discussions, there has been input from campus personnel and external reviewers. Several sessions with campus assessment personnel focused on how the student portfolio can align with the campus strategic plan and the institutional portfolio, as well as how the student portfolio can be improved. Also, the PT³ collaborative exchange team reviewed the portfolio. This team consisted of teacher educators from four universities across the country. The team was positive, as indicated by the following quote from their report: "UNO surprised us by taking electronic portfolios to another level. These portfolios are also formative instruments linked directly to enrolled courses that can be used throughout the semester. Particularly successful is the design that provides both a template for the required elements and the ability for students to create uniquely personal portfolios."

Impact

Institution The institutional electronic portfolio is still under development, but its impact is being felt throughout this time of budget shortfalls as we focus on programs that are central to our metropolitan mission and our strategic plan. Further, as we move to AQIP adoption, it will impact our accreditation process and continue to communicate success toward our strategic planning goals.

Student Portfolio Although the portfolio process is still being developed, the integrated portfolio has impacted the total program in the College of Education. First, it has been the catalyst for discussion about the general goals of the education program, as well as how technology and assessment should be infused into the curriculum. Second, the portfolio process has encouraged faculty to focus on changes in the way future teachers are prepared. Many faculty-initiated innovative ideas have been shared and implemented through the collaboration process. Third, the process has helped bring staff, faculty, and college and campus administration together to discuss successes, challenges, and possible strategies for improvement. Fourth, students have been very positive in their use of the portfolio. One quote from a student evaluation indicates some the impact of the portfolio: "Using the portfolio has helped me understand what I need to know and the reflections are helpful to me. Also, now I feel very comfortable using technology."

Future Plans

Institution The portfolio will grow to include all of the vice chancellor's offices and reporting units, ensuring accurate and up-to-date information for the AQIP systems portfolio. Further, the strategic planning steering committee serves as the perfect group from which to choose an AQIP team, as it already contains all the necessary units and constituencies.

Student Portfolio The portfolio is a process, not just a product. This process is ongoing, and revisions and additions will continue to make the portfolio meet the needs of teacher candidates, faculty, and the institution. The next major step is the development of a student-generated "professional portfolio" that can be used by potential employers in the teacher selection process. This will require discussion with school districts and school administrators who are involved in the hiring of teachers.

The College of Education is committed to making the digital student portfolio an integrated part of assessment, evaluation, and instruction. New elements and techniques will continue to make this project important to our program's revisions and ultimately our program's impact on teacher candidates and the quality of education in the classrooms they will direct.

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Application of the Higher Learning Commission Guidelines for Distance Education and the Institute for Higher Education Policy Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Education to a Comprehensive Distance Education Evaluation

Dawn Voigt and Randall Coorough

Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) in Pewaukee, Wisconsin, is an organization committed to continuous improvement. WCTC recently conducted a three-phase evaluation (self-study, on-site review, and improvement/follow-up) of its distance education (DE) delivery methods as part of its continuous improvement efforts. This was the first evaluation for distance education at WCTC, and its purpose was to review the status of Internet and telecourse delivery at WCTC and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Background

Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) has been offering instruction via distance delivery methods (Internet, telecourse, and Instructional TV) since the mid-1990s. Distance education has become an increasingly popular alternative for students with very busy lives and multiple demands on their time. In addition, the technology has become more affordable and is in widespread use in many homes. The technology used to deliver DE has been subject to rapid changes in the recent past, as well.

Distance education activities are coordinated and delivered through WCTC's Instructional Resource division. This unit supports aspects of instruction including curriculum design, faculty development, and technology related to teaching and learning, and impacts every instructor on campus. However, curriculum development, course selection, and instructor assignment for distance education occur **within** WCTC's various instructional units, which had implications for design of the evaluation process and the construction of the self-study committee.

Developing the Process

In late 2001, WCTC's director of curriculum design and instructional technology (head of self-study committee) began meeting with the evaluation coordinator to plan the review. It was decided to limit the review to Internet and telecourse delivery due to the substantial difference in the asynchronous nature of instruction versus the synchronous and more traditional methods used for instructional television. It was also determined that the three-phase evaluation process typically used at WCTC (a self-study, on-site review, and an improvement/follow-up phase) would be appropriate for examining DE. However, the search was on for a framework that would provide a structure for both the self-study report and the work of the self-study committee, the construction of which had not been determined at that time. The typical outline WCTC used for program reviews was clearly inadequate for this purpose, and no other published guidelines for this were available through the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (in the 1999 publication *The Book of Professional Standards for Higher Education*), which supplies standards for service and student support unit evaluations.

Since DE was delivered in a decentralized manner at WCTC (unlike many institutions that have DE departments), and in order to involve as many key stakeholders as possible and enhance the ability to effect positive change, a large and diverse self-study team was in order. Five instructional resources DE staff members were automatically part of the self-study team, and the decision was made to solicit nominations from higher-level WCTC administrators about possible participants from their respective units who should be on the team. Thus, for about three-quarters of the self-study team members, participation was voluntary.

The Distance Education Self-Study Team

The self-study team consisted of twenty people from across the college. They represented all levels of employees (support staff, managers, and instructors) and included instructional staff, instructional managers, technical and lab assistants, representatives from information technology, registration, research and evaluation services, the library, and marketing, in addition to the instructional resources staff members. The committee was divided into three working subgroups: technical/support, curriculum/instruction, and student services/marketing. The subgroups were themselves cross-functional, and each had two co-chairs to direct and organize activities. Regular (usually monthly) meetings of the full group were planned, and the bulk of the work was conducted in the subgroups in between the full group meetings. At the first meeting of the full group, a modified strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis was conducted. This provided useful information on areas of concern and success and was also a basis for developing the group as an integrated unit with a common purpose.

A Framework for the Distance Education Self-Study Process and Report

Further investigation into identification of an appropriate framework for the self-study made the self-study team members aware of the existence of current national standards for DE in the form of the Higher Learning Commission "Guidelines for Distance Education" (including the "Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs") and the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) Benchmarks. These were distributed to self-study team members for review. Initially, they were discussed by the self-study team as a form of relevant background information. The DE self-study team was fortunate to have as one of its members a senior college administrator who (though since retired from WCTC) has served as an NCA accreditation site reviewer. This individual's understanding of the use of the Higher Learning Commission Guidelines was instrumental in allowing DE self-study team members to understand both the intent of the Guidelines and how they were used on an accreditation review.

As work began in the three subgroups, it became clear that there was considerable variance in the approaches and directions being taken by the subgroups. The variety of approaches rightfully caused concern among self-study team members. Subcommittee co-chairs were charged with working out a consistent format and process by which to assess WCTC's effectiveness in DE. To this end, the six co-chairs met to develop a unified approach. Upon further study of the Guidelines and Benchmarks, it became clear that each of them was structured in a way that somewhat paralleled the configuration of the subcommittees (that is, their content clearly addressed curriculum/teaching/learning, technology/technical support, and student support). There were a number of Guidelines and Benchmarks that addressed institutional factors that were beyond the control of those involved in the WCTC DE evaluation. The co-chairs determined that it would be possible and effective to integrate the Guidelines and Benchmarks and use them as a framework for the self-study report.

IHEP Benchmarks are formulated into seven categories.

Benchmark Area	Sample Benchmark
Institutional Support	The reliability of the system is as fail-safe as possible.
Course Development	Instructional materials are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet program standards.
Teaching/Learning	Feedback to student assignments and questions is constructive and provided in a timely manner.
Course Structure	Faculty and students agree upon expectations regarding times for student assignments completion and faculty response.
Student Support	Questions directed to student service personnel are answered accurately and quickly, with a structured system in place to address student complaints.
Faculty Support	Technical assistance in course development is available to faculty, who are encouraged to use it.
Evaluation and Assessment	Intended learning outcomes are reviewed regularly to ensure clarity, utility, and appropriateness.

Clearly, there is an emphasis on issues relating to teaching and learning in these Benchmarks. Topics related to technology and technical support are embedded within the various benchmark areas.

The Higher Learning Commission Guidelines are categorized as follows.

Guideline Area	Sample Guideline
Curriculum and Instruction	The institution provides appropriate training for faculty who teach in DE programs.
Evaluation and Assessment	The institution ensures the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees and credits it awards.
Library and Learning Resources	The institution ensures that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources.
Student Services	The institution provides adequate access to a range of services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling.
Facilities and Finances	The institution possesses the equipment and technical expertise required for DE.

The co-chairs analyzed both the Guidelines and Benchmarks for overlap and unique components. Then each of the topics was placed under the purview of one of the three working subgroups. That is, all topics related to course development, instruction, learning, and assessment were “assigned” to the curriculum subgroup; all topics related to technical issues and technology were assigned to the technical/support subgroup; and topics relating to student support and services were assigned to the student support/marketing subgroup. Some topics could fit under more than one subgroup, and the decision was made that each subgroup could address the same topics in some cases, but should do so with deference to how the topic relates to that particular content area. Duplication could be addressed when the final self-study report was compiled.

However, since the Guidelines and Benchmarks were pitched at a relatively broad level, it would be necessary to operationalize them in a way that had meaning for those involved in delivering DE on a daily basis. To accomplish this, the subgroup co-chairs developed a work plan that each of the subgroups could use to guide its efforts and assess WCTC’s performance in delivering DE. The work plan called for the development of key questions, data sources/measurements, and local targets under the various benchmark areas. For example, one technical/support benchmark area was “the delivery system is as reliable and fail-safe as possible.” Under this benchmark, the following key questions were asked: “Is the system reliable and stable? Is there adequate bandwidth for simultaneous delivery? Is there an adequate disaster recovery system available?” The local target for this key question was established as “no more than five documented incidences per year of lack of server availability and accessibility.” The data source/measurement for this key question was the “Web delivery system log.” In most cases, specific subgroup self-study team members were assigned to gather data that would be used to determine whether local targets were met.

The “Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs” (a supplement to the Higher Learning Commission Guidelines) provided a model for and were helpful in developing the key questions used in the self-study report. They are laid out in considerably more detail and specificity than the Guidelines and Benchmarks.

Conducting the Distance Education Self-Study

The DE self-study team began meeting in February 2002, and the three subgroups had completed work plans to guide their efforts by June of that year. The subgroups reported on their progress to the full group at each of the meetings throughout that spring. The summer months were spent gathering data to determine whether local targets were being met. Data gathering included a survey of current DE students; a survey of DE students who did not complete their Internet courses; and group meetings with DE instructors, instructional managers, and instructional department support staff members. In some cases, one-on-one interviews were conducted with WCTC staff members (the directors of admissions, financial aid, and the career center). As data were gathered, it became clear that there were not adequate data to determine whether the targets were being met. In those cases, the target often became ensuring that adequate data were available to assess whether local targets were met in the future.

It should be noted that involvement by self-study team members remained strong and positive throughout the process. All full-group and subgroup meetings were well attended. One of the most encouraging outcomes of the self-study process was that many areas for improvement were identified during the self-study process, and solutions were implemented along the way. This was very reinforcing for self-study participants. During the self-study meetings when specific topics were being discussed, it was common to hear a self-study team member say, “I didn’t know that was how it worked” when a colleague explained a specific DE operation for the first time. WCTC is a large institution, and it appears that simply providing a forum that offered key stakeholders from across the college the opportunity to discuss issues and engage in immediate problem solving was very effective.

However, since the group was essentially operating on a consensus basis, the length of time needed to prepare the self-study report exceeded the time planned for this phase. By early fall, each of the subgroups had completed its sections of the self-study report. The co-chairs wrote most of the actual report, but all self-study team members had a chance to review the content within the three subgroups and then finally as an integrated report. When the DE self-study report was being compiled, additional improvements were made in its format. Where targets had not been met or where additional issues emerged, specific steps for improvement and recommendations were added.

Conducting the Distance Education On-Site Review

In November 2002, Phase II of the evaluation process, an on-site review of our distance education methods was conducted. A team of six external reviewers, each an expert in some aspect of DE, from technical colleges, four-year colleges, and one for-profit consulting group was recruited to participate in the on-site review. The team members were sent the self-study report and other supporting materials approximately two weeks before the on-site review. The on-site review team members came to the two-day review armed with considerable detail about the WCTC DE operation. Review team members reported that the benchmarks, measurements, and local targets were useful to them in gauging WCTC's level of performance (in some cases, they referenced an enhanced ability to judge DE delivery and performance at their own institution). The review team members commended the WCTC DE self-study team for their thoroughness and the use of national standards in the self-study process and report.

Follow-up and Improvement

WCTC is just entering Phase III of our DE evaluation (follow-up/improvement). We are optimistic that we will be able to continue to successfully apply the framework provided by the Guidelines and Benchmarks to WCTC's continuous improvement process. The establishment of a baseline level of performance in areas relating to DE should enable us to determine whether we have maintained current levels of performance, improved our performance, or decreased our performance over time. The results of the self-study and on-site review have helped identify areas where additional data are required to determine whether we are meeting local targets. The self-study team has yet to meet following the on-site review to plan specific improvements and an overall course of action.

Note: The Higher Learning Commission Guidelines are available on their Web site at <<http://www.higherlearningcommission.org>>, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy Benchmarks are available at <<http://www.ihep.com>>.

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Guidelines for Online Learning: A Collaborative Approach

Michael Wahl, Ronda Edwards, and Garret Brand

As colleges offer increasing numbers of online courses and programs of study, concerns about the quality of such non-traditional modalities seem to correspondingly increase. While distance learning advocates have long been able to cite research that shows “no significant difference” and publications that appear to consistently indicate the efficacy of technology-mediated instruction, such citations do not entirely address the concerns related to quality of online learning. The quality of online courses and programs of study, in aggregate, can benefit directly from guidelines and standards that lead to desired outcomes.

Complicating the adoption of such guidelines and standards at many individual colleges is their participation in any of a variety of “virtual university” consortia. These collaborations often involve a number of institutions from a state or region sharing online programming in various distinct ways. The common feature is that students are typically provided access to a greater number of online courses and programs than would be available solely from their home college. From the perspectives of both public policy and individual institutions, this enhanced access to online programming is clearly desirable. At the same time, colleges recognize that the curriculum and many of the courses offered to their community will have been developed elsewhere, and it may be necessary to reassure their constituents that the programming is of high quality. Assurance of the quality of these newly available courses and programs is a naturally occurring and appropriate component of the consortia.

Course and program standards and guidelines, however, have the potential to impact both academic freedom and, when adopted across a consortium, institutional autonomy. Thus, for such guidelines to be both meaningful and useful, it is critical for their development to involve a broad cross-section of individuals representing the variety of institutions and interests in the consortium.

A Collaborative Approach to the Challenges

As Michigan community colleges began to consider possibilities for online programming, they recognized that emerging information technologies made it possible to work together in unprecedented ways. Through the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA), the Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative (MCCVLC) was established in 1998 to facilitate the development and delivery of online courses and programs of study. The “Memorandum of Understanding” for the collaborative, adopted in summer 1999, provided the framework for intercollege collaboration. While this initial document did not specifically include program or course guidelines, such guidelines evolved through the collaborative processes of the consortium.

Prior to the establishment of the MCCVLC, five or six colleges had offered a handful of online courses. Highly innovative faculty who were interested in distance education usually developed these courses; however, the courses typically represented only a fraction of the diversity of the college course offerings. In many cases, there was initially little or no deliberate strategic planning in the development of courses offered via distance education technologies. With the development of the collaborative, the MCCA trustees and presidents provided a clearer vision for the growth of curriculum development for online delivery.

It is noteworthy that this vision included a set of principles established to guide the development of the collaborative, and the first of those principles identifies the importance of faculty involvement and professional development of faculty and staff. From the MCCVLC “Guiding Principles”:

The faculty and staff at all Michigan community colleges will have the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to contribute to academic, training and service programming of the collaborative and to receive training and support to improve their capacity to contribute.

Consistent with these guiding principles, the development of all courses offered through the collaborative has been accomplished by individual faculty at member colleges—faculty experienced in pedagogy as well as in their disciplines. While these courses have in

some cases utilized online and CD-based resources from sources such as textbook publishers and courseware developers, MCCVLC-listed courses are expected to be more than just a collection of online resources. Online courses should foster a community of learners and include substantial interaction between student and faculty as well as between and among students. Because of the significance of interactivity and the necessity of integrating this interactivity with the learning materials and all other aspects of the course, curriculum development and delivery have been, and will continue to be, the responsibility of the faculty at member colleges. This reliance on faculty at member colleges has profound implications for the quality of the resultant programs.

Program Guidelines

The development of complete online programs of study is a challenge for all Michigan community colleges, particularly smaller institutions. Larger colleges may have the human, financial, and technology resources to independently develop complete online programs of study. The basis of this collaboration, however, allows all members of the consortium the opportunity to work together in the development of programs of study that can be delivered online. Included in the “Memorandum of Understanding” is an articulation agreement that facilitates this collaborative program delivery. Under this agreement, colleges are able to share courses that are identified as equivalent in the MCCVLC online course catalog.

To assist member colleges and provide some guidance for individual member institutions in the development of programs to be offered through the collaborative, staff representatives from all Michigan community colleges drafted language to address specific program guidelines. Once reviewed by the MCCVLC advisory council, the program guidelines were reviewed by chief academic officers at Michigan community colleges and subsequently recommended to the MCCA board of directors for formal adoption. In July 2001, the guidelines were formally adopted as an appendix to the MCCVLC “Memorandum of Understanding.”

The program guidelines identify the issues that colleges must address when developing an online program of study to be offered through the MCCVLC. The guidelines are divided into six categories, briefly described below.

1. Program development, including consistency with mission, identified need, outcomes clearly identified, appropriate credentials upon completion, long-term allocation of resources for program continuation, and external/internal approvals.
2. Curriculum design and development, including guidelines for program development by academically qualified faculty, utilizing instructional design processes consistent with best practices, managed by faculty and staff with knowledge of distance learning, is complete and addresses all components of the program (i.e., clinicals/labs), fosters community, is available and is reviewed for currency, and has appropriate institutional policies in place.
3. Faculty support for online programming, including faculty development and training as well as appropriate faculty support services for program delivery.
4. Student support services, including access to authoritative program information online, program advisement, admission, access to required course materials, and financial aid.
5. Program assessment, including a clearly articulated program assessment plan and a plan for course-level assessment of learning outcomes.
6. Program review, including program enrollment, program graduates, program costs, faculty composition and expertise, and currency of curriculum.

Each Michigan community college or group of colleges that collaboratively develops a program of study has agreed to follow the above guidelines when offering a program via the MCCVLC. Prior to inclusion of the program on the collaborative Web site, all institutions involved in offering that degree must submit a program agreement form documenting the particulars of the program. The information provided on this form is of great interest to students who are considering enrolling in the program from remote locations, as well as to college staff members who may need to provide support to these students.

Course Guidelines

Beyond the definition of clear program guidelines that assist colleges in development at the program level, the collaborative has developed course guidelines to address issues involved in the development of online courses. These guidelines were created by and for the benefit of faculty to assist in the design of courses that are of the highest quality and will provide students with exceptional learning experiences.

The development of these collaborative course guidelines was influenced by similar documents, including

- “Guidelines for Distance Education” from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (2000)
- *Maintaining the Delicate Balance: Distance Learning, Higher Education Accreditation and the Politics of Self-Regulation*, commissioned by the American Council on Education (Eaton, 2002)
- *Distance Education: Guidelines for Good Practice* (2000) prepared by the Higher Education Program and Policy Council of the American Federation of Teachers
- “Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever” (Chickering and Ehrmann 1996), the American Association of Higher Education
- “Instructional Standards for Online Quality Online Courses” (2002), provided by the Michigan Virtual University.

Once developed, the MCCVLC course guidelines were reviewed during a two-day retreat of Michigan community college faculty and staff and then presented to the MCCVLC advisory council for review and approval.

Briefly, the course guidelines address eight specific areas of an online course.

1. **Course outcomes** are clearly stated, observable, measurable, and achievable; appropriate for online delivery; and closely correlated with real-world performance.
2. **Course content** is appropriate to the learning objectives, provides clear expectations, defines all prerequisite knowledge and skills, clearly states all requirements, includes all necessary components; content, practice, and testing are consistent with type of objectives, appropriate for multiple learning styles, encourage active learning, and provide clear, understandable instructions.
3. **Course interaction** requirements are clearly stated; activities foster appropriate interaction, encourage cooperative/collaborative learning, and provide flexible opportunities for interaction; and instructor response standards are clearly articulated.
4. **Course assessment** methods are appropriate to outcomes, activities, and technologies; is timely, appropriate, and responsive to learners; documented assessment is conducted by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcome; and effective policies and procedures are employed to ensure integrity.
5. **Course technologies** are appropriate for subject matter, with necessary infrastructure in place to support instruction, properly integrated with textbooks and lesson assignments.
6. **Course resources** are accessible to students, in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act; adoption of textbooks and other instructional materials have input from appropriately qualified people; and reading level of instructional material is identified.
7. **Course maintenance design** is evaluated regularly for effectiveness, and plan is in place for continual review and improvement.
8. **Course development support** – faculty have appropriate training, technical support, and access to appropriate technical infrastructure; qualified instructional designers have appropriate role in course development.

Once the guidelines were reviewed, a task force of the MCCVLC advisory council was formed to develop a rubric that could enhance the guidelines and result in a document that was more useful to faculty in the development of online courses. The task force, consisting of faculty and staff, collaborated in the design of the rubric, which provides specific examples of how each guideline should look and work in an online course.

Once completed, the “MCCVLC Online Course Guidelines and Rubric” was presented once again to the MCCVLC advisory council for review and approval. The council approved the recommendation from the task force, stating that each institution should have a process in place that addresses quality control of online courses. The “MCCVLC Online Course Guidelines and Rubric” is a valuable tool for assessing the quality of courses offered through the MCCVLC.

Unlike the “MCCVLC Online Program Agreement,” which member colleges have established as a requirement for offering online degree programs via the MCCVLC, the consortium does not prescribe the use of the guidelines. Some colleges have adopted the guidelines and rubric for faculty self-assessment of courses that they are developing or have developed. Other colleges utilize them as part of an orientation program for new faculty, or as a peer-to-peer review activity; while still others utilize them for work with faculty needing additional assistance as identified by other assessment measures. Finally, the MCCVLC has begun conducting workshops on

assessing quality in the online course that incorporate the use of the guidelines and rubric and provide an environment for faculty to learn how they were developed as well as how to effectively use them to assist with the development or improvement of their online courses.

Conclusions

Michigan community colleges have successfully collaborated in the development of a system (the MCCVLC) that has enhanced access to online programming for the residents of the state. Using modern information technologies to extend access to courses and programs from other institutions, however, is breaking new ground for these colleges. Reconciling the resulting desire for inter-college quality standards in online programming with traditions of institutional autonomy and academic freedom is a challenge best met through dialogue and collaboration. From the beginning, with a thoughtfully developed “Memorandum of Understanding,” the twenty-eight Michigan community colleges have utilized the MCCVLC as a platform for such dialogue and collaboration. The widely diverse input of the various groups and individuals involved in developing these course and program guidelines has made evident the fact that Michigan community colleges are more alike than different; nonetheless, having written agreements on which to base current and future collaborative efforts will increase the likelihood of success for our colleges and our students.

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Best Practices for an Online Degree Program

John Howard

This session examines the issues that impact the planning and implementation of an online degree plan. The focus is on the policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to provide a quality program. Not only will technical issues be discussed, but so will the coordination and presentation issues.

It is evident that the way learning is understood and defined is the basis of the decision-making process that occurs during the design of online courses. Most instructors, if not all, have a personal belief or theory about learning that determines the nature of the courses they create. Such beliefs or theories have direct implications for the strategies that are selected by instructors to assist their students in working toward achieving learning outcomes.

An instructor may ask the following question once the learning outcomes have been formulated: How can the students be challenged to themselves **construct** the required meaning as contained in each learning outcome? The instructor accordingly translates each outcome into a relevant problem to be solved. Students are enabled to explore learning resources through which information can be acquired, processed, and applied.

Instructors become facilitators who assist students to construct their own meanings, conceptualizations, and solutions to problems. Learning is thus an active process of constructing knowledge, and facilitation is a process of supporting that construction.

Facilitation of learning in the context of virtual spaces is concerned with the creation of a supportive learning environment for the students. The instructor needs to create situations in which students build knowledge and share it with experts and peers who, in turn, offer authentic assessment and timely feedback. It is apparent that enabling personal relationships have to be created between the students, as well as between the instructor and each individual student. In reality, the instructor becomes a mentor to each student.

Ultimately, the instructor guides students in respect to their learning. This also means that the students become aware of their learning actions and consciously plan, execute, monitor, and evaluate these actions. Students need to be encouraged to become responsible for their own learning.

Online programs at many institutions have online expanded tremendously in the past few years. Students around the world have seen this alternative course delivery method as beneficial to their own lifestyles and learning styles. Today, the traditional methods of teaching are not enough to provide all students with the same opportunity of learning. As a result, many institutions have implemented and offered online courses to reach out to those students seeking this new way of learning. The drawback, however, is that many of these institutions do not have coordinated and well-thought-out plans. Courses may be plentiful, but where do they lead? How does this delivery method fit into the institutional mission? The design and development process for online courses should fit into the model of: design, development, implementation, and evaluation and revision.

Turning a simple online course into one that utilizes certain practices need not be overwhelming. This discussion will demonstrate ways to approach learning the technology that incorporate several best practices without additional burden to faculty; instead, it should make learning the technology easier since it has a purpose, a place, and a pedagogy.

Your department chair enters your office and says, "Next semester, I want your course to have an online component." An overwhelming feeling of gloom and doom takes over. Where do I start? How do I begin? In this paper, I discuss some simple tools that can enhance your course and how they apply to best practices.

1. Facilitates student-to-faculty interaction
2. Facilitates student-to-student interaction
3. Promotes active learning

4. Gives rich, rapid feedback
5. Promotes time on task
6. Communicates high expectations
7. Incorporates diverse learning styles

Most faculty members who are preparing to go online are forced to think only about the hows of online and almost never about why. Typically, instructors are content experts in their particular fields; however, they are usually not pedagogical experts in relation to online delivery. Left to their own devices, they are capable of producing large quantities of content with little or no instructional design. Teaching the technology of online platforms is much less difficult when the trainer incorporates either the pedagogy or good teaching principle that it embodies. The tools in most online platforms are pedagogically sound and lend themselves to flexibility and implementation of the best practices. Whether you believe in the concepts of the best practices approach or not, one fact cannot be argued: Teachers want to teach effectively. Determine how the basic tools and features of the platform you are using embody the best practices, and translate that into not just an online substitute for that practice, but an enhanced experience of the practice through online technology. My experience in course design and faculty training has shown that addressing the why makes the how much easier to grasp. This approach keeps the focus on teaching and off technology.

Good pedagogy engages the learner. Building an online course that encompasses all seven practices and engages the learner is really not as difficult as it may appear. A simple course design that uses all seven of the practices could consist of a detailed syllabus, an organized discussion board, and a place where students locate their grades to keep track of their progress.

A good online syllabus should include learning objectives, a timetable of all course activities, the required resources, a grading chart, and anything else that facilitates time on task and communicates high expectations. Listing dates for assignments, exams, and discussion topics is great for the concrete, sequential, and advanced organizer. Most online platforms include a syllabus tool, which allows the designer to build a comprehensive syllabus through the use of platform-generated prompts. As an alternative to using a built-in tool, the designer can create the syllabus off line and convert it to HTML.

An active and organized discussion board can facilitate student-to-student and student-to-faculty interaction. It should be designed to promote active learning and provide rich, rapid feedback. It also caters to verbal, social, and textual learners. It is the responsibility of the instructor to post good open-ended topic questions to facilitate good debate. Put thought into the organization and topics. Setting parameters for the discussion board will help make it a better teaching tool. Some of these parameters are how many original postings and follow-up replies a student should make in a semester or per topic; how quickly students can expect instructor response to a posting; how casual or formal the writing style in a posting should be; the quality of the posting (it should be furthering the focus of discussion); and how much of the final grade will come from participation in the discussion forums.

The students need to be kept informed about their progress. Most platforms include a tool to do just this. These tools give the student needed feedback, which can vary from immediate to timely. The instructor can include a comment column for private written comments, can release statistics on any numerical column, and can use a calculated column to give a running total of the student's progress.

As time goes on and comfort level improves, you can begin incorporating some of the more advanced tools into the course. This will make the course a richer, more meaningful online presence. Courses should be constructed with the student in mind. Many students taking online courses for the first time feel they are on their own, on some island with no help. Online learning should be a rich learning experience. It should be a collaborative effort, with emphasis on forming a community of learners, not individual students.

It is evident that an online course can never be regarded as fully completed as far as its design and development is concerned. As feedback is received during presentation of the course, as instructors reflect on their efforts, as new developments occur in the content field, and as information and computer technologies improve, a course is redesigned and redeveloped. The instructor continually improves skills, and students' learning experience is enriched.

As more and more content-driven courses are designed, the logical next step is a full online degree plan. This initiative takes more than just a division or department with enough courses for a degree plan. The entire institution must be involved.

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Creating a Virtual Faculty: Ways to Bring Order to Online Instruction

Ann Roberts Divine and Anne Wessely

Forty-years old and organized into three campuses and three educational centers throughout more than seven hundred square miles of metropolitan St. Louis, Missouri, St. Louis Community College (SLCC) regularly struggles with the issue of the degree to which it should be centralized. However, when the college first offered online courses, there was no conversation, much less debate, about this issue. Online instruction was decentralized and distributed as nothing had been in the past. Individual instructors with an interest in distance education modified their courses as they thought appropriate, and those courses were scheduled and taught. There were no committees, no proposals, no review, and no problems—at least from the perspective of the instructors.

In addition, St. Louis Community College was far from a pioneer in online education. At the Meramec campus, the first course, in psychology, was offered in spring 1999. The next semester, two mathematics instructors created other online courses, but not much else happened. Then, a new president arrived at the campus in 1999–2000. He had an interest in distance education and thought, not without reason, that Meramec was not doing much in this area. He provided strong encouragement and incentives, and a few more instructors plunged in to experiment with this new pedagogy. That same year, St. Louis Community College adopted the Blackboard software as its online platform, making creating courses relatively painless from the technological point of view. Also, the college created a Center for the Support of Teaching and Learning and staffed it with an instructional designer with expertise in technology-enhanced instruction. The online explosion was underway, and almost overnight the situation became chaotic and unmanageable.

By spring 2002, Meramec offered three dozen Web-based courses taught by about twenty-five full-time and part-time instructors. These instructors were working independently, often without guidance from anyone, including one another. To those institutions with a long history and broad offerings of online courses, this may seem insignificant, but for this college, it was exponential and potentially aberrant growth.

Encouraged by the president, relying on Blackboard to ease the technical difficulties, and with the instructional designer available to help with specific problems, more and more instructors thought that online instruction was for them. It was as easy to make course materials available to students as it was to forget that an online classroom is fundamentally different from a conventional one, and that the course must be adjusted accordingly. Only through experience did the instructors realize that there is more to online instruction than posting one's lecture notes and asking students to participate in chat sessions about the material. Unfortunately, in many cases this realization came late in the online teaching process.

It should be pointed out that St. Louis Community College was aware of the problems that were rapidly developing in online education and was attempting to develop some structure and standardization. Unfortunately, the route it chose was not very successful. An ad hoc task force, followed by a large advisory committee, met throughout 1999 and 2000. Charged with making practical proposals for implementation, the latter in particular fell victim to its size as well as politics and peripheral issues. By beginning with questions other than "What makes a high-quality online course?" it bogged down in less central questions.

In the meantime, more Meramec instructors, acting independently, were creating more online courses with neither supervision nor peer consultation. A couple of instances brought the issues to the fore. In two cases, the college had scheduled online courses that needed instructors just as the semester started, when it was too late to turn back. Thus Anne Wessely was thrust into online education. Another accounting instructor had developed an online version of a course that attracted so many students that the department needed a second section. In order to help out and because she was interested in online instruction, Anne agreed to teach it. Her experience pointed out the flaws in the *laissez-faire* attitude that had prevailed, and she determined to try to improve the situation.

Teaching an online course the hard way demonstrated to Anne not only some important elements of online instruction but also the indispensable value of sharing problems and ideas with other online instructors in order to anticipate problems unique to online instruction and to avoid some unexpected pitfalls. Recognizing the fundamental differences between online and classroom courses, she spent much time offering prospective online instructors such advice as

- Plan the entire course thoroughly before you start. (It's much harder to change the tenor of an online course once underway.)
- Consider which of the possible ways you wish to communicate with students. (You can't count on catching them after class.)

- To minimize the possibility of cheating, require more, smaller, and more frequent assignments rather than a few major ones. (It's impossible for the instructor to know what's happening at the other end of the cable, and some students may find that situation tempting.)
- Develop ways that demonstrate to you that students are participating regularly and keeping up with the course. (You can't take roll when they walk in the classroom door.)

Anne continued to talk personally about her experience, and the college continued to make little official progress in setting pedagogical standards and administrative procedures for online courses. So Ann Divine, whose responsibilities include staff development, suggested that Anne Wessely, working with a committee of other online instructors, develop the "Online Faculty Guide" to bring together the best practices and instructional lessons learned from their experience in online teaching. Anne, whose discipline is accounting, was joined by instructors from biology and English, so there was considerable variety in the courses represented and their requirements and challenges.

The three-person committee began with a literature search. Then they involved the entire cadre of online instructors by contacting each one individually and soliciting his or her opinion about the form and content of the faculty guide. These ideas became the foundation of the guide.

Working over the summer, they were ready to present a draft to other online instructors at a staff development session during service week of fall 2002. At that session, instructors grouped themselves to consider particular sections of the guide, such as "Communication: Creating an Informational Web-site," "Communication: Your Online Identity," "Course Content: Course Objectives," and "Course Content: Using Internet Resources." These groups were more enthusiastic and involved than had been anticipated, and they made significant contributions to the draft through suggestions based on their own experiences.

The draft was distributed to all faculty members and remained available online throughout the fall 2002 semester, for continued review and consideration by other instructors at Meramec as well as the other two SLCC campuses. In addition, Anne repeatedly asked for feedback via e-mail solicitation, meetings of the online instructors (another new activity), the campus Blackboard site, and personal solicitation.

The result is a faculty guide for online teaching that was developed inductively—by instructors who know what they're talking about—rather than standards and instructions handed to the faculty by the administration or a committee. There has been lively discussion leading to the consensus-based advice that now appears in the guide.

One of the unforeseen benefits of this process is meaningful contact among instructors who usually don't have reason to see each other. Instructors from a wide range of disciplines—astronomy, chemistry, communications, criminal justice, machine shorthand, meteorology, physical education, and psychology, among others—have engaged in substantive discussions about aspects of teaching, particularly online teaching.

Readers of the guide see its greatest value as the shared ideas and documents it offers to new and repeating online instructors. The long-term benefit is that, without mandating standardization, greater standardization has occurred. Students who enroll in online courses at St. Louis Community College are now more likely to receive consistent information about the course and what to expect, and to undergo a more consistent educational experience from one online course to the next.

Moreover, the process of sharing and discussing the unique aspects of online instruction has brought the online teachers together in a new way. They have become a "virtual" faculty, with many common ideas and standardized ways of managing online instruction. The number of online instructors and courses has not increased much in the last year, but growth is imminent, owing to a technological advance this spring that removes some of the tedious and time-consuming clerical tasks that previously fell to instructors. And the college is ready—with a manual that new instructors can rely on to help them develop and present high-quality courses that not only respond to the particular problems of distance education but also take advantage of the additional opportunities it offers.

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A Comprehensive Approach to Online Student Services

Gary Langer and Robert J. Griggs

Background

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU) is made up of twenty-seven two-year colleges and seven state universities.¹ The law creating the system was passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 1991 and went into effect on July 1, 1995. The law merged the state's community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities into one system. Instead of three separate governing boards and three chancellors, there is now one board, and Dr. James H. McCormick serves as the chancellor for the system. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities serve approximately 235,000 students per year in credit-based courses and an additional 95,000 in non-credit courses. More information about Minnesota State Colleges and Universities is available at <http://www.mnscu.edu>.

Bemidji State University is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and is located in Bemidji, Minnesota. Bemidji State serves approximately 4,800 students and, provides high-quality distance learning opportunities to students located in central and northern Minnesota through the university's Center for Extended Learning. Additional information about Bemidji State University is available at <http://www.bemidjistate.edu>.

The Growth of Online Learning at MnSCU

In recent years the number and size of online course and program offerings at campuses throughout the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system have experienced dramatic growth. From fall 2001 to fall 2002 the number of online course offerings provided by MnSCU institutions has increased from slightly over 330 to more than 850. During the same period, the number of programs of study available completely online has also increased from 11 to 28. Currently, over 10,000 students complete courses online through Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

To support this growth, the recently adopted MnSCU strategic work plan has a goal that calls for the system to "continue development of distance and technology-enhanced education opportunities to improve the system's ability to respond to learner needs." The rapid expansion of online course and program offerings created a growing demand for student services that are accessible online. In response to this demand, the eStudent Services Workgroup was formed in spring 2001 to address issues pertaining to the development of a comprehensive system of online student services, accessible by both distance and campus-based students. The workgroup is currently made up of twenty-eight members representing sixteen MnSCU institutions and the office of the chancellor. The eStudent Services initiative is part of the strategic work plan and has been funded by two congressional awards and MnSCU system matching funds.

eStudent Services Workgroup Objectives

Since its formation, the eStudent Services Workgroup has focused on four primary objectives: (1) defining and identifying student services that need to be provided online; (2) benchmarking new online services against national best practices; (3) coordinating and leveraging existing student services work to minimize duplication of effort; and (4) creating eStudent Services projects to address gaps in service between existing practices and identified needs. Initially, campuses were surveyed to determine what student services were currently being provided online. Campuses were also asked to prioritize services that they believed needed to be developed online to better serve students. Results from the surveys conducted in spring 2001 indicated that only a few MnSCU institutions were providing even core administrative type services online (admissions, registration, online payment options).

In an effort to locate best practice examples for online student services, the workgroup sought assistance from the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications. The workgroup also adopted online best practice recommendations related to

fourteen student service categories as specified by the Western Cooperative in its “Guide to Developing Online Student Services.” The categories are

- Prospective student information
- Admissions
- Financial aid
- Registration
- Orientation services
- Academic advising
- Technical support
- Career services
- Library services
- Disability services
- Personal counseling
- Instructional support/tutoring services
- Bookstore
- Sense of community

Workgroup members examined each of the identified online student service categories, and determined that certain services could most efficiently and effectively be developed at the system level (for example, admissions, registration). Other services were deemed to be more appropriately developed and provided at the campus level (for example, academic advising, counseling). Two other areas were added to the fourteen original categories:

- Health services
- Student life

Recommendations from the workgroup were incorporated into the Integrated Statewide Record System (ISRS) eProject Plan for development during fall 2001 and spring 2002. Various MnSCU campuses were also selected to develop online “templates” for services that could be shared and replicated at other campuses, such as information for prospective students and orientation services.

The workgroup also examined a number of other state “system” approaches to providing centralized student services and recommended that MnSCU develop a student services Web site that would directly link students to campuses providing these services online. The resulting eStudent Services Web site initially focused on student services, but has now been expanded to include a complete listing of all online courses, programs, and services provided by MnSCU institutions. The new Web site is scheduled to be released in spring 2003, and it is accessible at <http://www.mnonline.mnscu.edu>.

In an effort to enhance communication and campus participation, the eStudent Services Workgroup also held a series of informational meetings at various regional sites throughout Minnesota. The regional meetings provided campus personnel with the opportunity for direct input in discussions about the best ways to leverage existing resources, encourage partnerships, and integrate technology into the delivery of student services. Information meetings were also broadcast to campuses over Minnesota Satellite (MnSAT) to allow greater stakeholder participation. An eStudent Service Project Web site and MnSCU eResources Web site (<http://www.eresources.mnscu.edu>) have also been developed to list best practices in student and faculty services online and to provide resources to assist faculty, staff, and administrators with the development and implementation of high-quality online programs and services.

Lessons Learned

In summary, the eStudent Services Workgroup has been a driving force for implementing change to better serve both distance and campus-based students within Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. The workgroup has developed a number of initiatives and has accomplished the following objectives:

- Identified and defined sixteen categories of services that represent best practices in online student services
- Prompted the development of an ISRS work plan that outlines whether the system or campus will be responsible for developing and delivering identified services

- Established two new business groups (disability services and career services)
- Developed an eStudent Services portal, which will provide users direct access to both system and campus resources
- Assisted in the development of the ePortfolio Project
- Created a project Web site to help improve communication and collaboration

More detailed information on each of the initiatives outlined above will be presented at the 2003 Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting. If you have specific questions related to the work of the eStudent Services Workgroup or Minnesota Online, please feel free to contact any of the following individuals:

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Note

¹ The MnSCU system is separate from the University of Minnesota.

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Student Achievement of General Education and Discipline Goals: Online Versus On-Campus Students

John T. Kontogianes and Cheryl Hughes

Oklahoma State Policy Statement on Assessment

The Constitution of the State of Oklahoma charges the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education with responsibility for prescribing standards for admission, retention, and graduation applicable to each institution in the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. The State Regents also have the responsibility of providing leadership in the coordination of the orderly transfer of students between and among institutions of the state system. Inherent in such responsibilities is prescribing mechanisms to monitor and facilitate the assessment of students for purposes of instructional improvement.

The Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education define student assessment as “a multi-dimensional evaluative process that measures the overall educational impact of the college/university experience on students and provides information for making program improvements.”

Tulsa Community College

Tulsa Community College (TCC) is a four campus, metropolitan, comprehensive community college with a central district conference center and administrative offices serving a metropolitan area of more than 800,000 people. The college is in its thirty-third year of operation and has an annual enrollment of more than 50,000 students in the credit area and approximately 8,000 students in its continuing education non-credit programs. Of the credit students, more than 5,000 take courses through distance learning each semester, with approximately 4,300 in online courses and more than 1,000 in televised courses. All courses at the college have the capability of Web presence.

Of the first-year students enrolling in a state public college or university within the Oklahoma State System for Higher Education in recent years, 64 percent of Tulsa County students begin their college education at TCC. Typically 82 percent of TCC students live in Tulsa County in the five-county standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA). The college is dedicated to establishing a learning-centered environment by providing excellence in its programs and is committed to providing quality education that responds to the needs of the community and to the individual's needs, interests, and abilities.

The Tulsa Community College Strategic Vision

Tulsa Community College's **strategic vision** was developed by a diverse all-volunteer committee composed of members from all campuses and across faculty disciplines and administrative levels and areas of the college, including the areas of student services and academic support. Full-time and part-time faculty were well represented, as were classified, non-teaching professionals, administrative staff, and members of the college's board of regents. The TCC **strategic vision** recognizes that the college's greatest resources are found in its human resources. Thus, a process of shared collaborative efforts supports most evaluations and decisions involving purpose and goals. The overarching principle is that all constituents are part of a learning-centered college whose entire reason for being is to facilitate learning by its students. TCC is committed to serving its diverse student body by providing excellence in higher education through a variety of formats, locations, and techniques in order to maximize the educational benefit for every student.

Goal One of the college's **strategic vision** is to ensure the vitality of all curricula. This goal contains five objectives that serve as the foundation of the development of the online curriculum:

1. The college will strengthen its process of assessment of student learning.
2. The college will assess student and community educational needs.

3. The college will assess faculty needs for effective teaching.
4. The college will include global education in its curriculum.
5. The college will offer a flexible curriculum with a variety of delivery options.

The goals clearly mandate continual assessment of all academic efforts, including all means of delivery. The college has implemented comprehensive strategies for entry level, general education, discipline and/or program reviews, administrative units, and student satisfaction assessment. Each assessment component is coordinated by the institutional effectiveness committee and complements the initiative as a whole.

General Education Goals Assessment Model

The faculty of Tulsa Community College has identified five goals to be attained by all students by the time they graduate:

1. Critical thinking
2. Effective communication
3. Global awareness
4. Civic responsibility
5. Computer literacy

The faculty-driven general education assessment committee at TCC has developed a unique model for assessing these general education goals across all academic programs and disciplines. The model is context-specific in that each goal is assessed according to the methods most appropriate for the context in which it is measured. The committee established an assessable definition for critical thinking that was accepted across all academic programs and disciplines. The definition is as follows.

“Students who have developed critical thinking skills will be able to demonstrate at least one of the following:

- *Comprehend complex ideas, data, and concepts*
- *Make inferences based on careful observation*
- *Make judgments based on specific and appropriate criteria*
- *Problem solve using specific processes and techniques*
- *Recognize relationships between the arts, culture, and society*
- *Develop new ideas by synthesizing related and/or fragmented information*
- *Apply knowledge and understanding to different contexts, situations, and/or specific endeavors*
- *Recognize the need to acquire new information”*

Likewise, the committee defined the characteristics for the effective communication goal:

“Students who have developed effective communication skills will be able to demonstrate at least one of the following:

- *Organized, coherent, and unified written presentations (in the language of the discipline) for various audiences and situations*
- *Organized, coherent, and unified oral presentations (in the language of your discipline) for various audiences and situations”*

Assessment in Practice

Assessment of the general education goal for critical thinking began with a small pilot group of faculty during the spring 2000 semester. Critical thinking skills were assessed for 227 students across five program and discipline areas. Results indicate that 84 percent of the students assessed at TCC successfully demonstrated critical thinking based upon the context-specific criteria for measuring skills associated with the goal. The individual faculty members who participated in the pilot study were trained as mentors

for other faculty within their respective disciplines. Workshops and training sessions were offered to demonstrate the reporting form and possible assessment techniques and responses. During the fall 2000 semester, all full-time faculty within the disciplines represented by the general education goals assessment committee members were asked to assess critical thinking. At that time, a total of 105 full-time faculty members assessed 2,455 students, representing 15 percent of TCC's unduplicated semester population. Results from that assessment indicated that 77 percent of the students assessed successfully demonstrated critical thinking as defined in the college's general education goals.

Finally, during the fall 2001 semester, the general education goals assessment process was implemented college-wide. Any full-time faculty members who had not previously assessed critical thinking, in addition to all adjunct faculty members, administered the critical thinking assessment. A total of 87 full-time faculty and 382 adjunct faculty evaluated 8,030 students, representing 48 percent of TCC's unduplicated student population. This effort showed that 78 percent of the students assessed successfully demonstrated critical thinking.

Those faculty members who had previously assessed critical thinking proceeded to assess effective communication, the second of the general education goals. In the fall of academic year 2002–2003, the faculty began assessing the third goal, civic responsibility. The plan is to assess all of the college general education goals by the 2004–2005 academic year. By that time, the institution should have a clear picture of the extent to which students are demonstrating the attainment of general education knowledge and/or skills.

The Online Student

Since its founding in 1970, Tulsa Community College has been committed to the use of technology in both its academic programs and its administrative and student support services. The Office of Distance Learning continues to add a variety of new services, courses, and programs in an effort to improve the quality and reach of its online curriculum. TCC's goal is to provide a seamless online experience for all students involved in this curriculum that is equal to or better in quality than the on-campus experience. Consequently, faculty delivering courses via the Internet are expected to assess their general education and discipline objectives in the same manner they assess on-campus students.

The distance learning enrollments now represent approximately one-fifth of the overall credit enrollments at Tulsa Community College, which now have reached 22,000 for the typical long semester. The college offers the courses for two degrees, the associate of arts in liberal arts and the associate of science in business, online. The college offers more than 150 courses in thirty disciplines online.

Results

In the fall 2001 semester, the college began requiring assessment of the online students with respect to the two general education goals, critical thinking and effective communication. The assessment and institutional effectiveness committee collected the same type of artifacts that are collected for the on-campus student assessments—essay questions, multiple-choice questions, examinations, and the like. Comparisons were made between the two groups of students in the following disciplines or programs: accounting, business, child development, English, history, humanities, marketing, medical assistant, philosophy, physics, and psychology. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups on goal attainment.

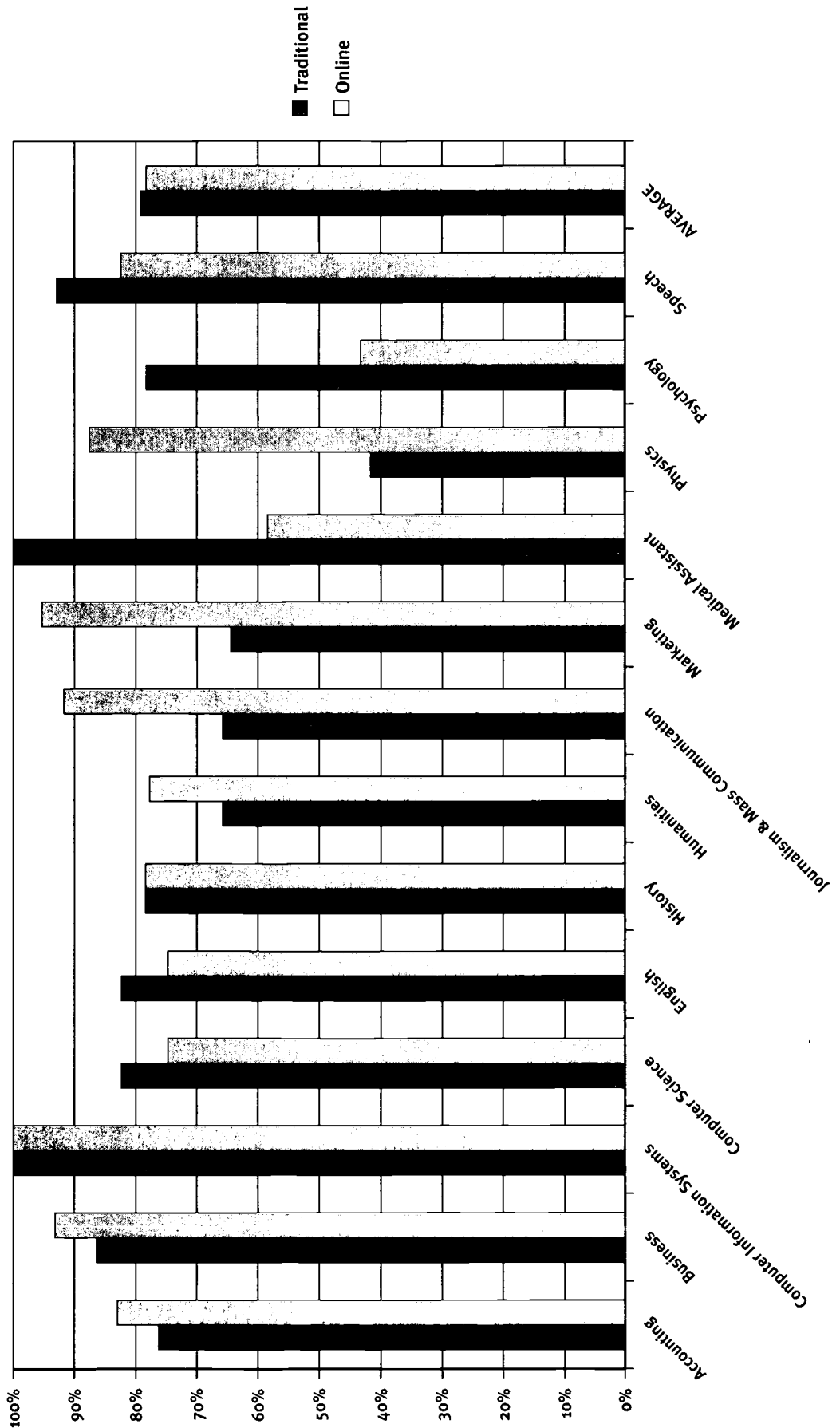
On the average, the online students scored 10 percent higher than the on-campus students with respect to the communication goal and 1 percent lower for the critical thinking goal. Statistically, there was no significant difference in their performance on either goal. One reason for the higher attainment in the communication goal may be that the online student cannot be invisible. Regular, clear communication occurs between faculty and students and among students in the online curriculum.

The college is currently assessing the third goal of civic responsibility and will have completely assessed all general education goals by the end of the 2004–2005 academic year. More than 20,000 students have been assessed during the past two years, and approximately 500 faculty members have been involved in the process. The assessment challenge has turned into a process that faculty welcome as part of a culture dedicated to the improvement of student learning. Further studies planned by Tulsa Community College will investigate the consistency of the achievement of general education and discipline goals and the effectiveness of the allocation of resources to support this dynamic process of mediated learning.

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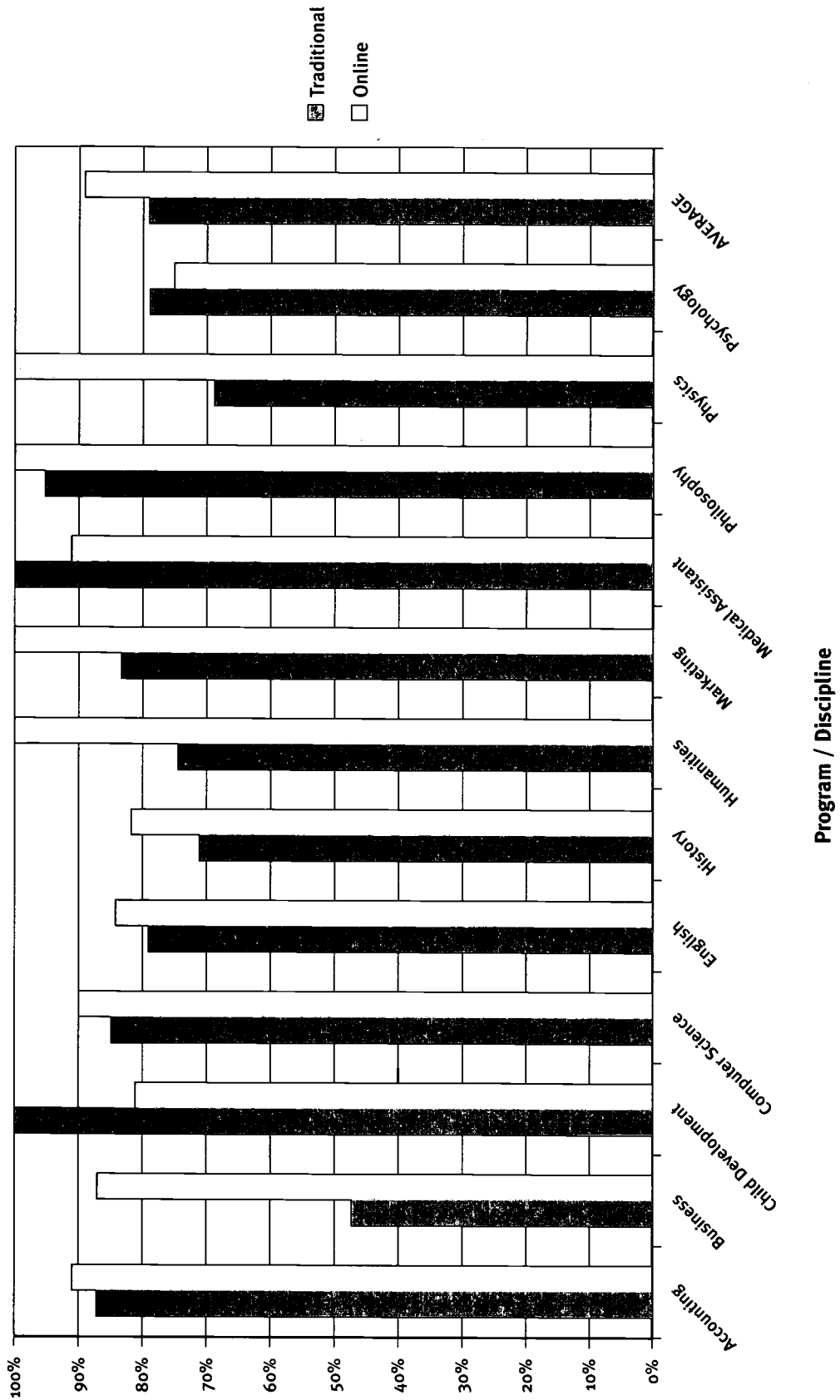
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Appendix A
Percent of Students Who Successfully Demonstrated Critical Thinking: Fall 2001



Appendix B

Percent of Students Who Successfully Demonstrated Effective Communication: Fall 2001



Distance Learning: An Assessment and Retention Resource

Eileen Stenzel

Introduction

This workshop focuses on the use of distance learning technologies to further enhance assessment and retention practices within the human services program at Calumet College of St. Joseph (CCSJ) since the NCA accreditation process in March 2001. Part One of the written presentation reviews the context of the commitment to distance learning technology. Part Two summarizes the initial impact of distance learning course supplements on assessment and retention efforts. The workshop portion of the presentation will focus more specifically on the initial impact of distance learning technology on strengthening assessment strategies as one of several aids to retention efforts.

Part One: The Context of Commitment to Assessment

☐ The Support of Adjunct Faculty

The board of trustees of Calumet College of St. Joseph approved the human services program (HSV) in spring 1996. The HSV program grew out of two earlier freestanding programs: addictionology, originally housed in the psychology program, and sociology and social work. The first students were admitted to the HSV program in 1996, and some of them were drawn from the sociology/social work and psychology programs. This fact is important because the college's prior experience with professional education in these two programs shaped the initial design and development of the human services program.

In July 1996 I was hired to serve as the program director and sole full-time faculty member in the program. Additional faculty included a consistent core of adjunct faculty, most of whom had taught in the addictionology and sociology/social work programs for a number of years. Their teaching loads range from one course per academic year to eight courses over three semesters.¹ The low turnover rate of adjunct faculty is important because to be successful, our assessment program needed to have consistency in and the support and involvement of adjunct faculty.

☐ Competency-Based Education

In the fall 1999 the CCSJ faculty voted to implement competency-based education across the curriculum. As a program director it was my responsibility to reevaluate the implications of this decision for the human services program. From the outset, although the HSV program material submitted to the board of trustees in 1996 did not incorporate the language of competency-based education, the program reflected the characteristics of a competency-based undergraduate curriculum that prepares students for entry-level employment and successful completion of graduate degrees in social work and counseling.

HSV had and continues to have a strong commitment to implementing professional education in a liberal arts context. Like most programs in professional education, the HSV program had an implied involvement in competency-based education. Put more simply, professional education is, by its very nature, required to demonstrate a strong link between curricular requirements and the demands, challenges, and expectations of a profession.

The college-wide commitment to competency-based education required the program to make its commitment more explicit and intentional. Nevertheless, the goals of the program remain the same: to prepare students for entry-level professional employment in the field and for successful completion of graduate studies. Assessment has always been understood to be critical to the attainment of these goals. Implementing competency-based education in the human services program would involve two things: continued focus on instruction that addressed mastery of higher levels of learning and multifaceted assessment strategies.

☐ Accreditation Review

As part of a college-wide assessment program and in preparation for accreditation review, the HSV program designed an assessment plan that promotes course-embedded and program-embedded formative and summative assessment practices.²

The NCA review process was an opportunity to articulate and strengthen HSV assessment practices. Ultimately, this is the point of NCA review: to provide a reporting mechanism for what should be ongoing self-study. Far from viewing the process as a faultfinding expedition, the college chose to see it as one that can serve to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning experience.

□ **Developing the Assessment Plan**

CCSJ is a small college with limited resources. Developing and implementing a good assessment plan requires efficient use of resources, simplicity of design, easy access to assessment results, and focused attention to the feedback process for improving learning outcomes. Good assessment plans are faculty-driven and program-based. They grow out of the people who have to implement them and refer back to the program in which they will be implemented. The HSV program operates within these parameters. We have and will continue to have one full-time faculty member who will serve as program director. Any curricular initiatives need, therefore, to take into account the dynamics of the large number of credit hours delivered by adjunct faculty. Practically speaking, this means that one of the primary responsibilities of program directors at the college is to nurture and sustain healthy, productive, professional relationships with adjunct faculty. Accomplishing this goal was one of three priorities that guided my first two years of employment at the college. Our move into strengthening the HSV program with particular attention to assessment (and retention) grew out of the combined efforts of program faculty.

- ◇ **Developing conceptual clarity.** The first phase of developing an effective assessment plan was gaining conceptual clarity and consensus on three basic ideas: the components of an academic program, competency-based education, and assessment.³ First, we identified an academic program as *both* the curriculum and the instruction. Second, we clarified our understanding of competency-based education (CBE) as curriculum and instructional strategies that work toward attainment of learning outcomes needed for successful entry-level employment in a profession and completion of graduate study. Third, we framed an understanding of assessment as a *process* of gathering information for *both* planning and evaluation purposes.
- ◇ **Designing a curriculum map.** The second phase of developing our assessment plan involved the design of a curriculum map. This involved four initial tasks. The first was to review developments within the various areas of the human services profession, with particular attention to changing requirements in counseling certifications and licensure. The second task was to clarify the goals of the program and distinguish them from program objectives. The third was to identify the overall competencies of the program's original four concentrations (pastoral counseling, criminal justice counseling, chemical dependency counseling, and social services), which are now two concentrations: social services and counseling. The fourth task was to identify specific course competencies and show how they supported the program objectives. By focusing on increasing our clarity about what, specifically, we wanted our students to know and know how to do, we were able to link our definition of assessment with our program goals and objectives. What information do we need to identify teaching and learning strategies that are working, develop more effective teacher- and student-based strategies to improve student learning, and evaluate students' level of attainment of desired outcomes?
- ◇ **Clarifying the levels and types of assessment.** Relying on the wealth of available resources in assessment literature, we entered the third phase of developing our assessment plan: identifying course-embedded and program-embedded formative and summative assessment strategies that would be effective in gathering the information we would need to achieve our assessment goals.⁴ In fall 2001, the HSV program initiated its "focus on formative assessment project." This was an effort to focus the attention of all program faculty on the importance of formative assessment in the teaching-learning process. The project asked each faculty member in the program to identify the various types of formative assessment used within the courses he/she taught and to share them within the program. The idea was that formative assessment was already going on in the program; we needed to identify it. Additionally, the formative assessment skills of each person teaching in the program could be strengthened by having information about the types of formative assessment strategies being used by other faculty members.

□ **Summary: Part One**

Good assessment practices begin with careful planning. As a program of undergraduate professional education, the human services program has, from the outset, reflected a strong commitment to offering curriculum and instruction that supports the attainment of professional competencies within a liberal arts curriculum. Assessment is not an event; it is a process albeit one that is made up of many events. The challenge of assessment begins with gaining as much clarity as possible about what we want students to know and know how to do and identifying what students should actually be able to do that demonstrate attainment of those outcomes. Assessment involves knowing how to get information about student learning and what to do with it when we get it.

Phase One of assessment in the human services program focused on clarifying conceptual understanding, identifying and developing assessment resources, experimenting with a wide range of strategies, and conducting annual review of the effectiveness and feasibility of our efforts.

Phase Two has been referred to as our "ready to launch" campaign. For the last year, we have been immersed in mastering the use of Blackboard as a means of supplementing instruction and eventually offering some of the curriculum in a distance-learning

environment. Part Two of the paper discusses the assessment benefits derived from the application of distance learning technologies within the HSV program.

Part Two: Post-NCA Review

☐ The Ready to Launch Project: Exploring Distance Learning as a Delivery System

One result of our accreditation review was the realization that we would need to acquire expertise about and experience in distance learning delivery systems in order to position ourselves as a viable presence within this market. The college had invested in making **Blackboard** available college-wide. The question we had to struggle with was whether the HSV program should pursue this path. In the end, the only valid reason for distance learning delivery is that it represents a strong, viable teaching-learning experience that overcomes time and space barriers. The fiscal argument regarding the impact of distance education on increasing revenue is important. However, that cannot be the only reason to take this initiative. It must enhance teaching-learning experiences or at least match the quality of best classroom practices.

The decision to move into distance learning formats either as the primary means of delivery of instruction or as a supplement to classroom-based instruction cannot and should not be made abstractly. It needs to be grounded in experience. The initial forays of the human services program into Blackboard were made as preparation for launching full or partial online delivery of the HSV curriculum, with an eye toward eventually offering an online graduate degree. The ready to launch campaign involved two goals. The first was development of faculty competency in using distance education technology. The second was developing expertise in incorporating the best practices of our classroom-based program into a distance learning instructional design process.

☐ Training of Faculty and Students

Ready to launch began with the decision to use Blackboard to supplement the existing curriculum. That experience would guide any future decisions about whether the program would move toward distance delivery of some or all of the curriculum. The initial goal was for 80 percent of the HSV curriculum to be Blackboard-supplemented by the end of the 2004 academic year. Faculty training was the first step. From January to May 2002 as program director I worked to develop a foundation level of skill in using Blackboard. This was done through several online training programs and one campus-based in-service training program. In May 2002 I began to develop Blackboard course supplements for each course I would be teaching in fall 2002. Pat Bogash, an adjunct faculty member, agreed to explore the uses of Blackboard for her courses. During summer 2002 we incorporated Blackboard training into the development of Blackboard supplements for each of her courses scheduled for fall 2002. By September each course being offered in the fall had an initial supplement up and running. As of December the HSV program was on target for attaining its goal.

The next phase involved training students in the Blackboard technology in lab-based, small group, and individual training sessions. This was a time-intensive process and speaks to the need for computers in classrooms as well as in computer labs.

The first group of students expressed more anxiety than the second. Those who were already comfortable using computers took to Blackboard with ease. They were especially positive about the increased access to information, communication, and supplementary resources that Blackboard gave them. Those who were less computer literate were more anxious. The second group of students to encounter Blackboard for the first time (in January 2003) had the advantage of a critical mass of students experienced with Blackboard.⁵ This speaks to the important role of student-to-student learning and support.

This first use of Blackboard was meant to explore its potential for strengthening student learning and to create an experience base from which more careful planning for delivery of our program could occur. We had some hunches about its value for improving teaching and learning, but no experience on which to decide the merits of those hunches. To know whether we would expand into distance learning required knowing whether we could and should. We had learned that we could. Now we need to learn if we should.

The needs of students relative to the attainment of learning outcomes would in the end guide any decision we would make about launching the human services program into a distance learning delivery system. CCSJ offers a range of undergraduate programs in both traditional and accelerated formats to a diverse student population. That diversity is characterized by a range of levels of readiness for college study, a range of work histories, a wide range of prior college experience, and a student population in the Tradition College, where human services is housed, that reflects many characteristics associated with an at-risk student population. Blackboard supplements would have to meet this wide range of needs.

☐ Experiencing Distance Learning as an Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

Our initial experience with distance learning applications has been effective in five areas:

1. Improved faculty-student and student-student communication

2. Increased access to course information and supplemental material
3. Increase in the diversity and effectiveness of formative assessment as a means of improving both teaching and learning
4. An additional tool for engaging student in critical thinking activities
5. Improved persistence and retention

The initial indications are that HSV distance education supplements for classroom-based courses can enhance assessment and contribute to retention. However, it is clear that this outcome results from all five of the areas.

The HSV program has gained a reputation for nurturing and sustaining strong, supportive relationships with students. There is a humorous and true story currently circulating among the students. A student called the program director to say that she was not going to return to school the next semester. The program director's response was simple: "Yes, you are, and here are three things you are going to do tomorrow morning." Of course, this story betrays a long-standing relationship between this particular student and this particular faculty member. But that is precisely the point.

In institutions working to improve less-than-stellar retention rates, retaining faculty is critical to retaining students. Consistency breeds familiarity, and familiarity buys wiggle room, precisely what we need in order to intervene with students at that level. No distance education technology can replace this most critical component, especially in institutions with a high representation of students drawn from at-risk student populations. Having said that, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which Blackboard can strengthen efforts to help students make good choices on their own behalf, especially those not accustomed to thinking of themselves in this way.

Distance education formats do several things that these students need. First, it makes it possible for them to access a course from the Internet. Second, it makes it possible for them to access one another at odd times of the day. This is critical for students engaged in group projects who have trouble finding commonly available times and meeting places. Students can engage in synchronistic discussion at a time convenient to all without the barrier of space and engage in asynchronistic group discussion, information sharing, resource development, peer review, and other similar activities when convenient to each individual. Experienced students in the HSV program (two semesters or more in the program) were most likely to take initiative in using the communication features with one another. Newer students were less likely to initiate discussion forums and e-mail exchanges. They were, however, equally represented among those who took initiative in e-mailing the instructor on a regular basis. Those communications often involved questions about assignments and topics discussed in class, and, most importantly, requests for help. It appears that it is easier for some students to express their concerns via e-mail than in person or over the phone.

It has been said that assessment is about improving student learning. However, to the extent that students are dependent on instruction for a good outcome (and this varies markedly among different student populations), assessment is also about improving instruction. One of the goals of good instruction has *always* been improving the quality of students' ability to learn. One of the major contributions of Blackboard in the HSV program has been as a resource for strengthening the link between instruction and the effectiveness of students' learning activities as a component of the "focus on formative assessment" initiative in the HSV program.

The initial use of Blackboard for formative assessment purposes has been slow, but positive. Primarily, Blackboard has enabled the use of chapter quizzes and discussion threads *completed prior* to attending class. Students receive points for completing the quiz, but the raw score on the quiz does not affect the final grade. This type of testing is limited to summative assessment sometimes done in class and sometimes done on line. Because Blackboard offers students and the instructor immediate performance feedback, these assessments can be used to identify the reading material students seem to have grasped and the information that posed the greatest problems. It can then be used to structure all or part of a three-hour class session. If students demonstrate an understanding of the contents of a chapter, it is possible to use class time to focus on attaining higher levels of learning (Bloom's *Taxonomy*), with particular attention to application and analysis tasks. Students who have not developed a basic understanding of the information and the concepts cannot benefit from instruction focused on upper-level learning. But just as important, instructional strategies that are targeted at application and analysis can strengthen the students' insight into the material being studied. In this respect, Blackboard is an extremely helpful tool: It supports more efficient use of class time for helping students have a learning experience that they cannot create for themselves and provides activities that can be completed without instructional assistance.

Our initial hunch was confirmed. Anything that enhances communication, improves access to information, intensifies the use of formative assessment strategies, engages students in the application and analysis of what they are learning, and provides opportunities for improved academic success and self-paced persistence increases the likelihood of academic success and persistence.

Conclusion

There is no easy formula for improving learning outcomes and retaining students, especially in institutions that work with large numbers of at-risk students. The solutions to the factors that put them at-risk should not be assumed to be any less complex than the problems themselves. Distance learning technology—either as a supplement to classroom-based instruction or as the primary means of delivery—is no panacea. It does, however, offer another resource for focusing our efforts and those of our students on the desired outcomes, on the development of the skills it takes to attain those outcomes, on the importance of time-on-task, and on the major thrust of the undergraduate experience: teaching students how to get information and what to do with it when they get it. Anything that intensifies that experience is a good thing. Blackboard has thus far proven to be a useful tool in the HSV program. Critical to that success is seeing Blackboard as a way to enhance undergraduate students' best experiences with instructors rather than to serve as a substitute for them. The challenge will be to construct distance education delivery that incorporates those best practices into the teaching-learning experience as it occurs within the distance learning format. This will require persistence by faculty in two areas: continued mastery of the technology, and focus on instructional design issues endemic to the use of the technology.

Notes

¹ In January 2001 the human services program initiated an accelerated format into its traditional course delivery system. Eight courses in the curriculum are offered in a weekend format. One adjunct faculty member has assumed responsibility for developing and delivering this part of the curriculum. The change in delivery takes these courses out of a traditional semester delivery and accounts for the eight courses over the semesters. These types of initiatives point to the need to rethink the format of the planning calendar.

² The HSV assessment plan also identifies institution-based assessment. These practices are focused primarily on summative assessment practice targeted at follow-up studies of alumni. The program engages in some institutional assessment, but that activity is not relevant to this discussion.

³ A project is underway that discusses the implementation of competency-based education in more detail. Here the reader might be helped to think of our model in terms of “a backward design, forward implementation” of a curriculum. “Backward design” refers to beginning with the competencies students need to have to be successful in their chosen professions, including the completion of a graduate degree in their field. “Forward implementation” refers to identifying the strongest possible approach to building and assessing the integration of those competencies over a long period of time.

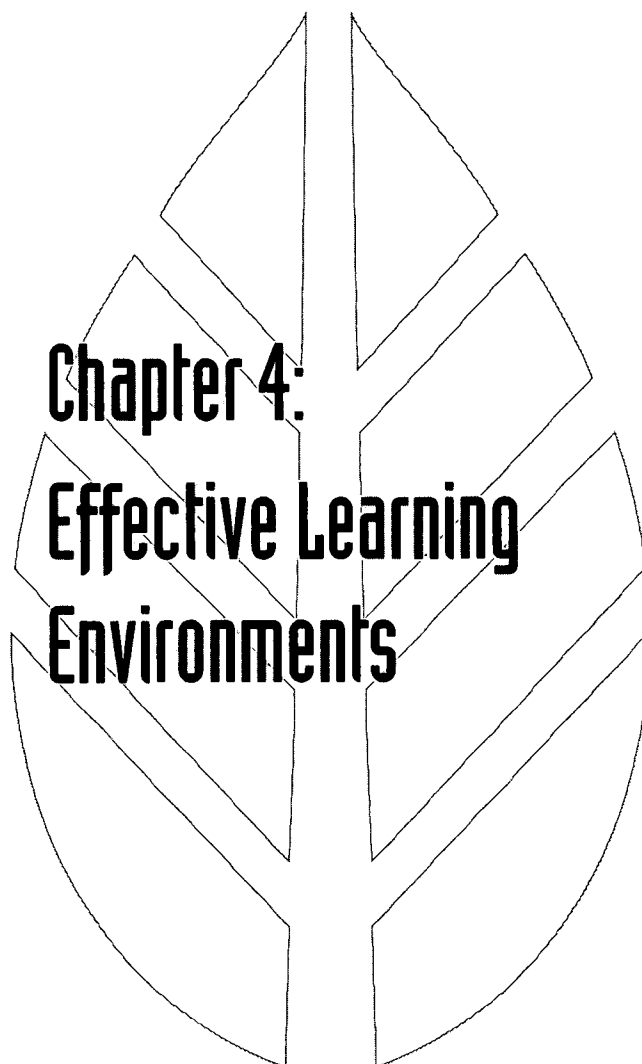
⁴ Cf. Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques, A Handbook for College Teachers*, (2nd ed.), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993; J. Dietel, J. L. Herman, and R. A. Knuth, *What Does Research Say About Assessment?* Oak Brook: NCREL, 1999; A. W. Astin, *Assessment for Excellence*. New York: Collier Macmillan, 1991; Trudy W. Banta, John P. Lund, Karen E. Black, and Frances W. Oblander, *Implementing Outcomes Assessment: Promise and Perils*, New Directions for Institutional Research #59. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988; Trudy Banta, *Making a Difference: Outcomes of a Decade of Assessment in Higher Education*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993; and *Assessment in Practice: Putting Principles to Work on College Campuses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

⁵ While I was incorporating Blackboard into the human services program, I was also using it in a graduate course in law enforcement administration. The experience of the graduate students was overwhelmingly positive.

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Volume 2: Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions



Chapter 4: Effective Learning Environments



Restructured Expectations: Building New Partnerships for Learning

Program of
The Higher Learning Commission

108th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association

April 13 — 16, 2003 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

Evaluating Libraries and Other Support Areas: Accomplishing Your Institution's Purposes

Rachel Applegate

Evaluation Beyond Teaching

Class, course, and program effectiveness are the most obvious goals of an assessment process designed to advance a college or university—and to satisfy the requirements of the Higher Learning Commission. Moreover, there are many measures, both standard and institution-specific, for assessing student learning and even for attempting to measure faculty effectiveness. Given always-limited resources, many institutions can choose to focus assessment issues on academic quality, and of course this is not a wrong focus.

It is one thing, however, to say that your college will “provide quality education,” another thing to ensure that classes and programs deliver quality instruction, and yet another to include all the other necessary components that lead to quality education. You know your target. Do you know all that goes into reaching it?

Where does an emphasis on course or academic program assessment leave the non-classroom, non-faculty-directed experiences that support student learning? Assessing and improving facilities and services such as tutoring, advising, laboratories, and libraries face three difficulties. These departments often

- Have lower profiles relative to other activities on campus
- Are characterized by costs rather than revenues
- Are organizationally separated from academic areas

The first two difficulties can, in the worst situations, become a morass of “Catch 22s.” If a service runs well, it thereby becomes invisible; if there are problems, faculty, students, and administrators might create work-arounds that do nothing to solve them. If a tutoring service serves many students, is that “good”? It may only make faculty nervous (what’s wrong with my teaching? are we admitting too many weak students?). The last difficulty, the common separation between student affairs and academic affairs, can make cooperation and candid, non-competitive assessment organizationally challenging.

Accreditation and effective institutional planning can be fully realized only when academic support units are understood as part of overall institutional assessment. The following four steps constitute a flexible framework that these units can use to link internal assessment to greater understanding—and appreciation—of their role in the college as a whole. What distinguishes these steps from existing internal data collection and assessment processes is the culminating focus on the bigger picture: tying support unit accomplishments to overall institutional goals; looking up and out, even if you wonder if anyone “out” there is looking back at you.

1. Review existing
 - Activities
 - Measures
 - Internal goals
 - External requirements
2. Distinguish between
 - Diagnostic and strategic measures
 - Goals and drivers

3. Link: tie measures with cause-and-effect hypotheses to
 - Institutional goals and strategic plans
 - Assumed goals or educational “goods”
 - External standards or benchmarks
4. Use the results
 - Add missing measures; delete redundant ones
 - Monitor long-term diagnostic measures
 - Use strategic results for immediate unit improvement

☐ Review

The review step is designed to reduce anxiety and lessen the workload involved. It relies on existing measures and encompasses multiple uses. This phase is founded on the notion that no one institution needs to reinvent wheels already spinning effectively, either internally or at other institutions. For this step, a unit simply lists everything it does, everything it measures, and every conceivable reason for doing them: institutional missions or promises, Higher Learning Commission guidelines, peer comparisons, and established benchmarks.

Sources of standards, goals, and measures:

- Higher Learning Commission statements on non-classroom resources: Criteria (current and new), General Institutional Requirements, levels of assessment
- Your college or university’s statements: mission, advertising, educational outcomes, modes of delivery, service characteristics, budget priorities or processes
- Your department’s current activities and measures or records: annual reports, budget requests, subsections of other unit reports, external surveys
- Government agencies or professional associations: standards, regulations, benchmarks

How-to, step 1: On a large piece of paper, list all of the measures your unit collects on one side, and all of the goals or outcomes that remotely apply to your unit on the other. Be sure to *note which measures are reported externally*.

☐ Distinguish Between

Many strategic planning discussions founder on terminology: what is an objective? a goal? a mission? a vision? The most important thing is that everyone in a given conversation (on a particular campus) understands what is being said, not that the terminology is the same across the country. The following discussion of the terms *diagnostic*, *strategic*, *goal*, and *driver* is derived largely from the strategic planning model formulated by Robert Kaplan and David Norton (1996).

◇ Diagnostic vs. Strategic Measures

- **Strategic measures.** Measurement and planning consume resources in terms of time and energy. Institutions must prioritize measures and decide which they will pay attention to. Furthermore, colleges frequently—maybe always—see themselves in competition with other institutions of higher learning. Why should a student attend This University? Why should a new Ph.D. consider teaching at That College? What college advertises only “We’ll make a college graduate out of those of you who finish”?

Advertising and administrative attention often seem to be drawn mostly to those areas of a college that most distinguish it from its peers. Is it environmental awareness? Is it the Corps of Cadets? Is it “intellectual and moral preparation for responsible living and meaningful work”? Several educational consultants have built their businesses advising institutions to “brand” themselves to ensure recognition in the minds of prospective students and to achieve unity of purpose and clarity of goals within the college (e.g. Stamats; see various issues of *U. Business*).

Well-articulated, strategic, mission-specific purposes will be the easiest to measure and to incorporate into an institutionally-understood assessment plan. The whole idea of strategic planning often revolves around creating dramatic plans and measuring one’s achievement of them.

- **Diagnostic measures.** However, at many institutions, most day-to-day academic support work will not have an easily determined, direct, and explicit link to an institution-specific mission, purpose, or plan. People need pulses; buildings need electricity: how do pulses and electricity contribute to your strategic plan’s five-year goals?

What happens, in this atmosphere, to those academic support units, or to their less-glamorous activities, that are not distinguished, are not unique, maybe aren't even cutting-edge—but are simply necessary? Do books get on the shelves quickly and in the right order? Can students find tutors when they need them? Are Web-posted student policies easy to find and to administer? Does someone answer the phone?

The strength of a comprehensive assessment process that *names* both diagnostic and strategic measures is that it acknowledges and values even those activities that cannot easily be tied to particular, unique, differentiating institutional purposes. Every body needs a pulse, so take care of the new and exciting strategic initiatives, but also list normal operating necessities.

◇ Goals and Drivers

Kaplan and Norton note that, consciously or unconsciously, strategic plans are descriptions of cause-and-effect relationships. In the same way a research hypothesis tests whether “if this treatment, then result,” a good strategic plan not only posits an end point but proposes methods of achieving it. Drivers are activities that are pursued because they are thought to result in the desired goal. If you know where you want to be, do you know what might get you there?

Example: advising center

- We want students to learn quickly and well (institutional goal).
- We think that one part of this is enrolling in the right courses at the right time (unit goal).
- We believe that sufficient numbers of well-trained advisers will get students into the right courses at the right time (hypothesized driver).
- We will measure our inputs: staff FTE; time-per-user, time-per-enrolled student, staff training time (measurement).
- We will measure our driver outputs: numbers of drop-adds, dollars spent on refunds, number of complaints (measurement).
- We will monitor our institutional goal output (measured elsewhere).

It is vital to maintain a clear distinction between a goal and a driver because if a goal is not achieved, the flaw can either lie in the driver (a process problem), or in the hypothesis (a causal problem). Conversely, a goal can be achieved even while a driver deteriorates if the unit is incorrect in assuming that the particular driver matters.

How-to, step 2: Start moving around the goals. Position drivers to the left of the ultimate goals they address. Mark generic measures as diagnostic.

Add this goal to the far right: If X function works smoothly, no one else on campus needs to spend time worrying about it, and we can spend more time working on other goals.

□ Create Linkages

Although academia has been characterized as an arena of “loose coupling” (Weick, 1976), it is possible to see all activity, from the most mundane housecleaning to the most advanced research, as advancing the cause of the institution. Examining the activities of your support unit, you should be able to orient every activity to general, academic, and institution-specific goals. Everything you do, in other words, is believed in some way to contribute to the success of your college.

How can you be sure it contributes? How can you prove it to others? Assessment generally attempts to test linkages that have often been assumed in the past. Does the delivery of a lecture equal student learning? Does earning a 3.0 average in biology courses mean a student is a good biologist? Since assessment perfection has not yet been achieved, be prepared to admit and understand that many identified linkages will not be thoroughly tested on your campus. Some can be supported by findings from other institutions, and some must simply be acknowledged as not yet verified.

Site-testable linkages are

- More likely to be program-specific
- More likely to be short-term
- Relate more closely to specific institutional strategies

Example: institutional mission: serve underserved populations in the area
 institutional goal: reduce dropout rate for first-generation students
 driver: increase academic advising for all students
 process measure: utilization of advising services in number and length of visits
 outcome measure: retention of first-generation students

or

driver: increase specific outreach to first-generation students
 driver: provide intense academic advising to first-generation students
 process measure: utilization of advising services by first-generation students
 outcome measure: retention of first-generation students

Research-testable linkages are

- More likely to pertain to common academic activities
- More likely to involve generic assumptions

Example: goal: student learning
 driver: quality librarians recruited and retained, utilizing faculty status and tenure
 research: faculty status is shown to correlate with improved educational outcomes (Meyer, 1999).
 It may not be necessary or even possible to prove at a given campus that a cause-and-effect relationship exists.

Untested linkages often

- Depend upon professional norms or averages
- Rely upon assumptions
- Support broad, ambitious, qualitative institutional goals

Example: institutional mission: to prepare students for responsible living and meaningful work
 driver: funding of a “just living center” offering co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that provide students experiences with volunteerism and social justice activism
 assumptions: graduates will continue in the same sorts of activities they engaged in during or before college. If an effective alumni survey is not conducted, this outcome cannot be measured.

or

prospective students interested in social justice issues will be more likely to enroll, thus creating a student body—and then alumni—more concerned with responsible living [measure: CIRP freshmen survey]

How-to, step 3: On the piece of paper, draw lines from measures and inputs through intermediate drivers to ultimate goals. Use solid lines for testable hypotheses, dotted lines for assumed. Designate a few (not more than 25 percent) of the measures, drivers, and goals lines as “strategic,” linked to specific institutional aspirations. The rest will more commonly be linked to very broad mission statements, to generic aspects of higher education, or to the “needs to work smoothly” goal.

☐ Use the Results

Once all measures are linked to goals via tested or untested hypotheses, all of the results are ready for quick and efficient use in one of three ways.

1. Improve measures. What is not being measured? What measures are redundant? Add and modify measures as experience dictates; *do not delete* measures noted as externally reported.
2. Monitor diagnostic measures. The goal is to have enough information to be able to spot troubling trends, but not to spend valuable time obsessing about lower-priority issues.
3. Use results from strategic measures to improve.
 - Goal is met? Examine which driver might be most responsible and/or most effective or efficient in reaching the goal.

- Goal is not met? Is the driver functioning as planned? (improve driver) Is the driver functioning but is not having the desired effect? (change hypothesis)

How-to, step 4: Using the data, distinctions, and linkages, create a report for administration in the following form:

- A. We appear to be achieving these goals with these methods.
- B. These goals are not being achieved.
 - We will be improving this function.
 - We will be changing from this function to that function.
 - We will wait and see if further information confirms this result.
- C. These routine activities are
 - Proceeding normally
 - At the X level for this function compared to X
 - Deteriorating or improving; a trend worth watching

Mission and Data: United at Last

After all four steps have been worked through, an academic support unit will have the tools to understand internally and explain externally, in broad view and in precise detail, how it fulfills its institution's mission and purposes. This methodology can coexist with many different approaches to institutional assessment and strategic planning: the goals on the left and the measures on the right can be tailored to specific circumstances. What is important is the lines: there are reasons why you do what you do, and ways of examining your impact.

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The Library's Role in Assessing Student Learning

Jill Gremmels and Claudia Ruediger

Introduction

What is the library's role in its institution's accreditation, especially as the emphasis shifts to assessment of student academic achievement? Is the library a passive player, citing traditional volume and circulation counts, or can it actively contribute to the institution's success? The Higher Learning Commission's "Policy Framework for the Proposed Criteria for Accreditation" and the Association of College and Research Libraries' revised standards for college and university libraries place greater emphasis on outcomes assessment, but institutions remain perplexed about the applicability of assessment of student academic achievement to the library.

In some ways, libraries are neither fish nor fowl: they have an academic purpose, but they typically do not generate credit-bearing courses; they have some role in assisting student learning, but they do not completely "own" any aspect of student learning. Librarians, too, debate these issues, with no clear resolution in sight. As López recently noted, "in institutional self-studies and accreditation team reports, it is still unusual to find any reference to librarians' contributions to the development of learning objectives for information literacy skills or to the interpretation of the outcomes of assessing those skills" (López 2002). Neither librarians, faculty, nor administrators are really clear on what and how libraries should be assessing or how this kind of assessment relates to the total picture of library quality.

Thinking About the Library in a Different Way

Newsweek reports a new university being constructed with no library. A state legislature considers eliminating the materials budget for the state university library because, after all, everything students could need is available free on the Internet. These misunderstandings point to a concern that libraries, as traditionally conceived, are, ironically, irrelevant in the Information Age. What can be the library's *raison d'être* when building a collection no longer seems adequate? We believe that the most compelling answer is student learning, especially in the area of the library's own discipline, information literacy.

In their 1995 *Change* article, Robert Barr and John Tagg showed the seemingly simple revision of priorities that occurs when we consider "how would we do things differently if we put learning first?" (Barr & Tagg, 1995) The Barr and Tagg article has captured the attention and imagination of many in the higher education community. Their distinction between the instruction paradigm and the learning paradigm is indeed revolutionary, reorienting both the goals and means of higher education. It can be equally transformative for academic libraries.

In their article, Barr and Tagg declare that higher education has confused the means with the end and set up teaching as the institution's purpose. They compare this view to believing that "General Motors' business is to operate assembly lines or that the purpose of medical care is to fill hospital beds." In contrast, according to the learning paradigm, "we now see that our mission is not instruction but rather that of producing learning with every student by whatever means work best."

The instruction paradigm is so pervasive that its strictures seem like laws, not choices. The mission of the instruction paradigm institution is to make education available. Courses are scheduled, students are admitted, and classes are taught. Whether students learn is of secondary importance, so although teaching itself is active, the student's act of incorporating that instruction and using it in some way is somewhat irrelevant. The purpose of a learning paradigm institution, by contrast, is to make education effective. Delivering instruction is not enough; a college or university must demonstrate that it produces learning. The criteria for success are outcomes, not inputs, as under the instruction paradigm. One could see the assessment movement as a harbinger of this paradigm shift.

Academic libraries also operate under a paradigm so entrenched that it is seldom recognized. It can be called the information provision paradigm. There is another possibility, however. The shift to the learning library paradigm, too, changes everything.

Barr and Tagg say that “in the Instruction Paradigm, the mission of the college is to provide instruction, to teach.” The information provision paradigm library is in a similar position. It collects, organizes, preserves, and makes available recorded human knowledge, but it accepts no responsibility for students’ application of that knowledge. After all, the classroom faculty create the assignments, have the sustained contact with students, and control the grades. These processes are beyond librarians’ control. Although librarians express concern about the amount of collection use, it is usually from a perspective of wasted resources, not eclipsed learning. Collection and preservation are ends in themselves, and although they are active pursuits, the library does not close the loop by insisting that the information be used in learning. Perhaps this is too strong. Some libraries do count uses of their materials and make acquisition and weeding decisions based on the results, but this output measure is too weak on two counts: (1) it simply counts number of uses, with no indication of the quality or character of each use, and (2) the library tends not to hold itself responsible for lack of use but blames the original selectors, often faculty, for poor choices.

Library success under the information provision paradigm is seen, by both librarians and users, as more access. Good libraries have bigger collections and are open more hours than poor ones. Reference librarians are available more of the time to help walk-up users get access to information in the collection. By this measure, performance is tied to inputs. Purchasing materials and staffing desks takes money, so better quality requires more resources. Users are assumed to be homogeneous in their access and learning styles. Reference desks are good at supporting spontaneous questioners with brief and simple information needs, but less successful at helping users with more involved questions. Similarly, individual carrels, which provide the vast majority of user seating at most libraries, are conducive to the style of one type of learner but prohibitive to many other styles.

The learning paradigm library takes the production of learning as its responsibility and assumes an active role in leading students to discover and construct knowledge. A learning library acknowledges that classroom faculty control more of the students’ educational experiences than librarians do, but it does not therefore assume that the library has no influence on the academic enterprise. As Barr and Tagg note, “To take responsibility for achieving an outcome is not to guarantee the outcome, nor does it entail the complete control of all relevant variables; it is to make the achievement of the outcome the criterion by which one measures one’s own efforts.”

Why the Library Should Assess Student Learning

Changing the emphasis from an information provision to a learning library makes assessment paramount. If the mission of the library is to produce learning, librarians must discover how well students are learning and use that information to improve their practice. Focusing on competition can lead to losing sight of the purpose of assessment, which is to enable improvement. This is the main reason libraries should assess student learning: to discover specific ways to improve teaching. Pressure from administrators or impending accreditation visits may provide incentive, but compliance is a weak motivator. It can invoke resentment that obscures the real and tangible benefits that result from testing whether students are learning what we are trying to teach.

How the Library Can Assess Student Learning: It Begins with Mission

The library’s mission statement should be a lodestar guiding practice and decisions, not just lofty words that are written, then ignored. The Higher Learning Commission’s “Proposed Criteria for Accreditation” document (November 2002) says, “The goals of the administrative and academic sub-units of the organization” should be “consistent with the organization’s mission,” but Robinson, in a 1994 study of 120 library mission statements, found that “rather than having derived these statements from institutional uniqueness, they typically adopted language from professional associations such as the American Library Association” (Robinson, 1994, cited in Bangert, 1997). According to Kross, “frequently mentioned elements...of library mission statements include supporting the curriculum, supporting research and learning, collection development, teaching library skills, providing space for learning and study, providing access to local and global resources, diversity, leadership, organizing resources including the collection, preservation of heritage, using new technologies, staff development, behavioral suggestions such as friendliness, and values such as lifelong learning, critical thinking, and quality of teaching and service” (Kross, 2002). Most of these elements are passive and reactive. Verbs like “supporting,” “assisting,” and “providing” suggest that the library has chosen a reactive role that indirectly affects student learning. It is no surprise that professionals in these libraries would be uncomfortable with assessment of student learning. They take no responsibility for learning because it is a long way from their core business.

Librarians can make a different choice, however. The mission statements described above are clearly within the information provision paradigm. The learning library paradigm shows another way. Consider the following mission statement from Wartburg College’s Vogel Library:

Vogel Library’s mission is to educate information-literate lifelong learners.

This means:

1. Educating students is our priority. It is the focus of all we do. While our information literacy program is the flagship, our more traditional library operations also contribute toward this goal:
 - Information literacy instruction provides an opportunity to make appropriate information choices and to evaluate the quality of information.
 - Reference service reinforces classroom learning in the context of answering individual questions and providing one-on-one guidance to students and staff.
 - Interlibrary loan gives students access to a world of materials and ideas.
 - Acquisitions/cataloging develops the collection which supports student and faculty learning.

Wartburg librarians are partners with classroom faculty in the college's educational enterprise. Our information literacy expertise complements the subject specializations of classroom faculty to create an integrated learning environment for students.

2. Information literacy is our foundation. We embrace the national Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education <<http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html>> and that document's definition of information literacy:

...a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."

In keeping with the standards, we emphasize the teaching of enduring concepts, not skills that obsolesce with changes in the next version of familiar software.

3. Producing lifelong learners is our objective. We intend to instill and reinforce in our students the abilities and habits of information-literate lifelong learning. To evaluate and improve our performance, we continually create assessments that measure the capability of our alumni and current students in this area.

The skills and knowledge we teach make Wartburg College graduates the future leaders and responsible citizens our country needs. This is the library's contribution to the college's mission as expressed in the Wartburg College Catalog: challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning.

In this statement, the Wartburg librarians have claimed information literacy as their discipline and taken responsibility for ensuring that all students become competent in this vital skill. They are well aware that others are integral to this effort, but they have staked out a position of leadership.

How Libraries Can Assess Student Learning: Examples

A learning-centered mission statement points the way toward assessment. An information literacy program is the obvious venue, and the Association of College and Research Libraries has done academic libraries a great service by creating the national "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2002). This set of eighty-nine outcomes, organized into five standards, provides ready-made objectives for librarians and classroom faculty to use in choosing and assessing information literacy skills they want students to develop in any given course or throughout the program.

Assessment can occur within the structure of an activity the library controls or in partnership with classroom faculty. Direct measures include

- Pre-tests and post-tests. At Wartburg, the pre-test is given on the first day of EN 111 (English composition) and EN 112 (intermediate composition) classes in the fall term. The test is administered by the composition faculty, and the college assessment office helps with scoring and interpretation. The format and venue of post-tests is under development.
- Primary trait analysis of papers and products. This would not have to be tied to any library instruction but could shed light on students' use of sources.
- Mini-portfolio methods such as examining the bibliographies of student papers and projects.

Indirect measures can also be used.

- Students and professors can give feedback about information literacy instruction after the assignment is completed, using prepared forms or one or two open-ended questions. This method provides much more useful information than a "popularity contest" questionnaire at the end of the instruction session.

- Research logs that students keep as they look for information can reveal their reasoning in selecting indexes and databases, devising search strategies, and choosing search terms. Students can also explain whether and why they changed, narrowed, or broadened their original topics.
- A quick assessment can be obtained by asking students late in the semester what they did differently in working on their assignments as a result of information literacy instruction. Like many of these examples, this one requires cooperation from classroom faculty members, but professors also desire to improve their courses with assessment feedback and are likely to participate cheerfully if the method is not too intrusive.

Information literacy instruction is not the only library activity in which student learning can be assessed, however. The Wartburg librarians are undertaking a project to determine whether students believe they learn anything from reference service and, if so, whether it is connected to anything they learned in an information literacy session. With interlibrary loan software like ILLiad and others, it ought to be possible to periodically ask students to share their reasoning when selecting materials to request on interlibrary loan and to gauge the sophistication of their thinking. Nowhere is it written that institutions must assess every single function that they perform or that they must run all their assessments simultaneously and perpetually.

Other Indicators of Library Quality

Assessment of student learning does not give a total picture of library quality, of course. Traditional input measures continue to provide valuable information about resources—print, electronic, and human—available to students and faculty as they learn and teach. Outputs give some notion of how much clients are using the resources. Contrary to what many librarians seem to think, however, these measures do not constitute assessment. We would argue that assessment of library-related student academic achievement should be the centerpiece of the library's evaluation process. It will show where the library is excelling and ways it can improve in the most important area, student learning. It positions the library as a participant or even leader in the institution's assessment efforts and proves its importance to the academic enterprise. It may even encourage people to believe the old saw about the library being the heart of the university.

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Returning Academics to Center Stage: Benefits of a Campus-Wide Undergraduate Research Day

Gina E. Lane, Marc A. Cadd, and Nina T. Pollard

Importance of Undergraduate Research

In the last ten years the introduction of purposeful undergraduate research programs has been touted as an essential part of every undergraduate student's collegiate experience. In 2001 the journal *Science* stated: "Undergraduate research programs are proliferating, and undergraduate research conferences and journals are becoming a permanent fixture on the university's landscape" (Gonzales, 2001, 1624). In that same issue, the results of a recent study of 136 liberal arts institutions noted that the number of students engaged in research had risen by 70 percent over a ten-year period (Mervis, 2001). While many undergraduate research programs still focus on the sciences, a survey of more than 100 institutions found that most have expanded their efforts to include research and creative activities in all disciplines. "A decade ago, there were relatively few such all-college symposia and they now appear to be ubiquitous, with the majority reporting they are only in their second or third year of operation" (Noice, 2002, 165).

The benefits of support for undergraduate research have been widely noted. According to Hamilton College President Eugene M. Tobin (1998), the undergraduate research movement began in the science departments of liberal arts colleges. His claim that undergraduate research "makes our professors better teachers and our students better learners" is supported by a number of authors. In 1998 a Council for Undergraduate Research white paper highlighted the need for institutional support for undergraduate research. Abrash, Otto, and Hoagland (1998) found that those institutions providing undergraduate research opportunities to a wide range of students had greater alumni graduate school placement than those that limited such opportunities to honors students. The report also noted that these same institutions made students aware of these opportunities early in their academic careers.

Besides the advantages of improving student and faculty scholarship, institutionalizing undergraduate research is now heralded as a way of "marketing" the college or university. Some colleges and universities are holding research symposia in conjunction with recruiting events. "By means of such scheduling, potential students and their parents (and newly accepted students) become acquainted with the undergraduates' involvement in high quality research" (Noice, 2002, 166).

While all of these benefits are substantial, one aspect rarely mentioned is the positive effect an undergraduate colloquium can have on organizational identification. A campus-wide undergraduate research colloquium communicates to campus members the importance of the academic mission and the centrality of the undergraduate learning experience. Events such as this are a significant means of addressing Ernest Boyer's concerns regarding the lack of unifying academic experiences for undergraduates. "Amid the atomized world of electives, distribution requirements, and departments, there were few unifying experiences and little sense that the whole could be greater than the sum of the parts. On many campuses, there is only the vaguest glimmer of what the whole might even be" (Coye, 1997, 22).

Increasing Organizational Identification

For several years William Jewell College, a small, liberal arts college in the Kansas City metropolitan area, had a variety of research and other capstone experiences scattered throughout its academic departments. Student presentations occurred in events sponsored by departments, and while a few students made presentations of research off-campus, these were primarily a result of departmental initiatives. There was little or no public recognition of this type of student achievement across the campus. Faculty members often noted that the central purpose of the institution, academics, seemed to be overshadowed by the attention given to athletics, religious activities, and social events. The centrality of academics in the culture of the college appeared to be fading. Indeed, the academic life at the college seemed to fit Hersh's description of the typical college or university—one that dichotomized "various facets of learning, as if our intellectual, emotional, and ethical lives were compartmentalized" (1999, 182).

An organization's culture is communicated to its members in a number of ways. If the central organizing principle of a college, its academic life, is taken for granted by its members, it will soon lose its energy and force throughout the institution, and organization identification will suffer. As a result, it is important that campus leaders look for ways to create programs and supportive rhetoric to maintain the centrality of the academic mission. The initiation of campus-wide programs can be a strategic means of improving individuals' feelings of allegiance, or identification with, their institutions. Research in organizational communication has found that identification tends to more readily occur when organizational values, goals, and information are clearly communicated to members. If individuals respond positively to these symbols of organizational culture, their decision-making processes within the organization will tend to reflect the same values (Schrodt, 2002). Therefore, the strategic initiation of such an event as an undergraduate research colloquium can be a means of improving the internal view of academics on a campus and can serve as an encouragement to all members to increase the importance of academics and scholarly activity in their lives.

According to organizational theorists, beliefs about an organization are socially constructed messages that are often initiated by administrators and other opinion leaders within the institution. These messages can directly address morale and other institutional problems.

Leadership can be viewed as facilitating the development of common perspectives on organizational events and behaviors to provide a stronger basis for coordinated activity among members. This is a particularly important managerial function because, although management may be unable to influence all the exigencies that impinge upon organizational decision-making, it can engage in communication that shapes the image of the organization held by members. Indeed, the nature and extent of image cultivation by management has been linked to organizational viability and presented prescriptively as a solution to organizational malaise. (Treadwell & Harrison, 1994, 69)

According to Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994), the inclusion of institutionally significant symbols, rituals, heroes, and stories in those messages is a means of communicating "the collective organizational identity to organizational members."

Strategic Elements of an Undergraduate Colloquium

The initiation of a campus-wide undergraduate colloquium in 2001 has both increased the amount of undergraduate research activity on campus and revitalized the academic vision of the institution. In planning this event, we included several strategic elements designed to communicate to both internal and external audiences the importance of undergraduate research and the academic purpose of the institution. Following the guidance of Hofstede et al. (1990), we will explain how specific symbols, heroes, rituals, and values were strategically utilized in planning the undergraduate colloquium. As a result, not only have a significant number of students from nearly all disciplines participated in the event, but the symbolic nature of the event has also provided an institution-wide rhetorical platform for increased identification with the academic mission of the college.

☐ Initial Planning

An event such as the David Nelson Duke Undergraduate Colloquium does not, of course, occur without a significant amount of planning. Six faculty members representing a variety of academic disciplines begin meeting in September to plan the April colloquium. The committee is selected during the spring semester of the previous year. Because the colloquium includes students from virtually all academic disciplines offered on campus, the chair of the committee and the academic vice president make a deliberate attempt to select and solicit committee members from a variety of disciplines. Of particular importance is the inclusion of instructors from the performing and visual arts; this strategic political and pragmatic move was particularly important when the word *research* was emphasized during our initial colloquium.

The committee's meetings early in the fall semester usually consist of identifying tasks to be carried out and dividing them up among the members of the committee. There are many events to be planned. Besides the student presentations and poster sessions, the day includes an opening convocation, an all-school picnic, and evening entertainment. Committee members communicate with food services, facilities management, and the offices of advancement and marketing regarding specific tasks that must be undertaken to make the day a success. Faculty members are reminded of this upcoming event throughout the fall and spring semesters. Each department is allowed to have as many as three presenting students.

Ongoing communication to all interested parties is essential. Students are notified of the coming event by interested faculty members and via e-mail. The application form and guidelines are available to students in a public folder on the college's intranet. While all of this planning is occurring, our advancement office is kept busy advertising the event. A promotional brochure is sent to all members of the campus community. A colloquium Web site must be developed and updated, and strategic invitations must be mailed to members of our board of trustees, local educators, administrators, and dignitaries, as well as local media. Once the presenting students have been identified, congratulatory letters are sent to their parents, who are invited to participate in the day.

The process of selecting students to present during the colloquium begins when students submit an application and abstract to their respective departments; the deadline for this is normally mid- to late February. The departments then meet collectively,

discuss the applications received, and identify and rank the top three. Those three applications are forwarded to the committee within a week. The committee reviews all applications and contacts the sponsoring students and departments within ten days. Students receive an official letter with additional instructions for working with their sponsors and preparing their presentations. This leaves the committee approximately four to five weeks to complete its preparations. To date, no departmental recommendations have been rejected, although additional information has been requested on occasion.

☐ Values

Besides the basic planning that is required by an event such as this, there are several opportunities to create strategic, purposeful messages that reflect basic values of the organizational culture. Hofstede et al. (1990) describe institutional values as comprising the very core of an organization's culture. These "broad, nonspecific feelings" encompass subjective assessments of what is desirable and undesirable within a culture. From the beginning, the planners of this event wanted to unify the campus through a celebration of student scholarly and creative achievement. An entire day is set aside within the academic calendar for the undergraduate colloquium; no classes are held. Instead of the scattered departmental presentations formerly held throughout the semester, the entire campus comes together to celebrate student achievement. As a result, our campus community has discovered the breadth and depth of student research and creative activities on campus. Simply setting aside a day for this event sends a powerful message to our students and other interested parties that we value the role students play in pursuing their own undergraduate research and performance interests.

An essential part of a liberal arts education is deliberate exposure to a variety of disciplines. Student presentations at the undergraduate colloquium are made up of intentionally varied panels to expose the audience to topics from a variety of academic areas. Science majors and faculty members who come to hear a physics presentation may stay to see the play about the ravages of AIDS, for example, or English majors present may listen to a music major who has composed an original piece for the event.

☐ Symbols

Symbols are "words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning within a culture" (Hofstede et al., 1990). All printed material about colloquium, including the program and promotional brochure, includes a stylized image of Rodin's *The Thinker*. This image sets the tone for the entire event by encapsulating the values of individual scholarship, achievement, and creative work. The image of the solitary figure in deep concentration may also be connected to the scholarly work ethic the college embraces in its motto, *Deo Fides Labora*, trust in God and work.

☐ Heroes

Rodin's *The Thinker* offers a framework from which cultural heroes emerge. According to Hofstede et al. (1990), the hero is a person who possesses characteristics that are highly prized within the organization and encapsulates important values of the culture. William Jewell's undergraduate colloquium is named after Dr. David Nelson Duke, a professor of religion who died of cancer in 2000 at age fifty. He is described in our colloquium brochure as a "theologian, scholar, teacher and social advocate. His articles and books, community activism, collegiality and passion for life made naming the undergraduate colloquium in his memory a natural choice." Duke represents a role model for all members of the college community to aspire to, and the retelling of his story is a means of inculcating his attributes in new generations of students and faculty.

☐ Rituals

Rituals are "collective activities that are technically superfluous but are socially essential within a culture—they are therefore carried out for their own sake" (Hofstede et al., 1990). Rituals provide a means of unifying a community while reinforcing important ideals. The David Nelson Duke Undergraduate Colloquium has several ritualistic elements built into the day. The colloquium begins with a convocation lasting approximately an hour and fifteen minutes. All major officers of the college, including the president and the academic vice president, are in attendance. The academic vice president, as the chief academic officer, guides the ceremony. The presenting students lead a procession into the college chapel, followed by the faculty in full academic regalia. The march symbolizes the mentorship of faculty and student in the guild of scholarship. The students are given a personalized certificate of achievement and are applauded by an audience of their faculty, parents, and peers. The keynote speaker, chosen on the basis of his or her own scholarly achievement, delivers a message about the value of undergraduate research, intellectual curiosity, and the relevance of "the life of the mind." Additionally, a faculty member delivers a brief message on a similar topic. A first-year student then delivers a response. Because the majority of the presenters are juniors and seniors, the inclusion of a first-year student as a featured speaker is a very deliberate means of showing younger students that they are both included and expected to participate in the future. In addition, including a faculty presenter and a student presenter emphasizes that we together comprise a learning community. The formal musical presentations at the convocation, together with the presence of gowned faculty members and trustees, add just enough pomp and circumstance to bring the colloquium up to par with the college's other all-campus events, such as graduation.

Student presentations mirror those of academic conferences. Students are divided into panels with faculty chairs introducing the speakers and recognizing questions after the presentations. In addition to selecting the student presenters, the committee

must recruit faculty members to moderate the sessions. These faculty colleagues need to ensure that students do not exceed the fifteen-minute presentation period and the five-minute question-and-answer session. Each session has typically included either four or five student presentations. The final academic activity is a centralized poster session adjacent to the “picnic on the quad.” The poster presenters are also given certificates of achievement and recognized for their distinguished contributions to the event. After the picnic, our college union activities organization sponsors “Jewellstock,” a multi-hour musical extravaganza modeled on Woodstock. This event provides wonderful entertainment during the evening meal and, because some of the performers are our students, further celebrates student achievement.

Lessons for the Future

Each year the committee deliberately reviews the colloquium, and each year we have learned ways to improve the day. During our first colloquium, some faculty members did not realize the importance of the event. E-mail messages were overlooked and announcements at faculty meetings not fully heard. A committee organizing such an event must realize how important *repeated* announcements are, particularly early in the life of the event. Promotion is crucial to the event’s success. It is essential to ensure that mailings are sent in time; that the Web site is visually appealing, current, and accurate; and that key participants know their roles. This year’s addition of an informative brochure has been very welcome and was certainly an effective tool in promoting our colloquium. The addition of Jewellstock also rounded out the student focus nicely. After so much mental stimulation, listening to fine music and eating at the same time are welcomed by all.

An event such as the undergraduate colloquium involves a constant learning process for those engaged with planning the day. This, however, is far from a negative aspect of being on a planning committee. As each subsequent year’s colloquium is held, the committee has noticed distinct improvements and heightened enthusiasm. Students from nearly every academic department have presented their work. The planners take justifiable pride in being involved with an event that emphasizes one of our goals as educators—allowing students to take more responsibility for their learning and sharing in their accomplishments. Since the institution of this event, the college has greatly increased the number of students attending regional and national research conferences. The president has made the promotion of student scholarly achievement a top priority. Last year two of our students were recipients of a Marshall Scholarship and a Truman Scholarship. As a result, we believe our efforts to “celebrate the life of the mind” at our institution have helped reinvigorate the academic vision of our college.

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Crossing the Great Divide(s): Implementing, Assessing, and Improving Interdisciplinary Core Curricula

Charles Taylor, Richard Schur, and Jeanie Allen

Introduction

Institutions of higher education face the challenge of redesigning general education to better meet the needs of students by continuing to examine the very idea of what it means to be an educated person. As a consequence, traditional discipline-based programs will likely evolve into interdisciplinary programs to realize the mission of higher education in the twenty-first century. The challenges of implementing and assessing the curricular and co-curricular effectiveness of such programs are considerable.

In 1988, faculty, staff, and administrators at Drury University (Drury College at that time) initiated the self-study process with an examination of institutional mission. “What does it mean to be a liberally educated person living in the twenty-first century?” became the driving question of this endeavor. By 1992, the new mission statement had motivated a systematic multi-year reexamination of students’ core learning objectives, leading the institution to a new vision that manifested itself in Drury’s current interdisciplinary general education program, Global Perspectives 21 (GP21).

The Curriculum

The GP21 program is designed to provide both a general education and a context for the academic major, which enhances a student’s ability to succeed in graduate school, professional school, and career. Drury’s approach to general education focuses on the development of writing, oral communication, scientific literacy, mathematical literacy, and critical thinking skills within the framework of global studies. Within an array of unique interdisciplinary courses, GP 21 brings together science and the humanities and examines the classics of the liberal arts tradition alongside today’s problems and major trends. As an integrated, developmental sequence of interdisciplinary courses, the global studies program helps students synthesize the perspectives and insights of many disciplines into a coherent understanding of the world, its peoples, and future possibilities. Its coherence and breadth allow Drury University to award a minor in global studies to all students who graduate. All Drury students take the following interdisciplinary courses: Alpha Seminar: The American Experience, Math and Inquiry, Science and Inquiry, Values Analysis, Global Awareness and Cultural Diversity, Global Futures, and Undergraduate Research. The scientific perspectives sequence has received more than \$500,000 in NSF funding and was awarded the 2002 Heuer Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Science Education by the Council of Independent Colleges. The Policy Center for the First Year of College recently recognized Drury’s first-year experience program, built around the two-semester course required of all first-year students, Alpha Seminar: The American Experience, as one of thirteen national models of excellence in first-year experience programs.

Design and Implementation

Following the creation of a new mission statement, faculty, staff, and administrators began designing this new interdisciplinary curriculum. Learning outcomes were generated directly from the mission of the university, and these drove much of the composition of the final courses. While faculty retained final responsibility for the curriculum, bridging the divide between academic affairs and student affairs became essential. If GP21 were to become the guiding force of the Drury experience, then students must be immersed in the goals of the curriculum both in and out of class. The ensuing discussions resulted in the first-year experience program that enhances the curriculum, beginning with the admissions process and summer registration for first-year students.

The design of the interdisciplinary core courses took five years. Interdisciplinary discussions driven by learning outcomes are not quick-fix approaches. With learning outcomes as a driving force, the debates regarding process versus content served to enrich the courses and faculty understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge. Excitement built as disciplinary boundaries were

dissolved. In 1995, Alpha Seminar, the first-year course, became a reality. In these past eight years, faculty from all but one department have taught this class. The other three core courses of the global studies component of the curriculum have also attracted faculty from a variety of disciplines. These courses—Global Awareness, Values Analysis, and Global Futures,—have been taught by faculty in the departments of architecture, physics, history, political science, sociology, philosophy, English, foreign languages, and interdisciplinary studies. The curriculum remains a living entity, constantly evolving as the global situation unfolds and faculty interest grows. However, it is the original set of learning outcomes that continue to influence the development of these core courses. To manage this constant growth, we have a GP21 council that discusses and approves any changes. The university's academic affairs committee also reviews any changes in the curriculum.

Assessment

In 1995, Drury submitted the assessment plan to the North Central Association for evaluation of the general education program, as well as departmental plans. The plan was accepted and assessment began as the first course of this new curriculum was implemented. The original plan for assessing general education involved direct measures of writing skills, oral communication skills, and critical thinking skills. The other three broad categories of learning outcomes—creativity, global perspective, and values analysis—involved more indirect measures because the faculty continued to discuss these three outcomes in depth.

Since that first year of implementation, Drury has continued to assess the learning outcomes of this curriculum. However, the methodology has evolved. We quickly learned that the information was far more meaningful to the institution when the strategy was part of the classroom curriculum. We also learned that the required paradigm shift for the institution from grading to assessing required much debate and discussion. In addition, it became important to ask ourselves, what do we really want to know? If we were to discover something, what would we do with that information? These two questions continue to enhance the assessment plan for GP21.

Improvement

Assessment measures have varied from in-class writing assignments, standardized exams, and faculty-designed essays to focus groups. We continue to be constantly reminded that gathering information is not the purpose of assessment, but that using the data for program improvement should be the goal. Thus, as information has been gathered, task forces of faculty were asked to respond to the question, "So, what should we do now?" Assessment results have driven a variety of curricular revisions as well as institutional shifts.

Information from the assessment of writing skills has helped to shape the direction of the Writing Center, a student-staffed organization designed to assist students with their papers. Oral communication skills assessment data have determined the need for more presentation experiences for students during all classes. In addition, a Center for Oral Communication Skills was created for students during the past year. Faculty are currently considering a more intentional approach to critical thinking in the Alpha Seminar course for first-year students.

Equally important has been the faculty development surrounding assessment information. Workshops on writing across the curriculum, teaching oral presentation skills, and other topics have been offered during the last eight years. Prominent outside speakers have been invited to faculty retreats to discuss such topics as critical thinking and exceptional learning environments for first-year students.

One exciting change has been Drury's approach to the weekly convocation series. As a result of an NSF grant, a task force made up of faculty from all disciplines worked on the extension of the core curriculum by creating a theme for each year based upon complementary issues to the GP21 curriculum. This themed approach to the convocation series has resulted in an integration of the GP21 curriculum across campus, disciplines, and communities. Themes that have already been used include Origins and Gender and Sexuality. The theme for the next academic year is Creativity, Exploration, and Discovery. The required summer reading and orientation for first-year students now centers around each faculty-determined common theme.

The Future

The original vision of this curriculum remains an integral part of Drury's environment. When new faculty members are hired, they know that teaching in the interdisciplinary core courses will be part of their responsibilities. As students are recruited, they know about the GP21 program and its components. Assessment discussions are an integral part of new faculty orientation. Thus, Drury maintains its evolving approach to general education.

Several new paths are emerging. One of the changes under consideration is a more intentional bridge between student services and academic affairs. College students spend the majority of their time outside of class. The question becomes, "How do we design environments and activities that create seamless learning for all students?" The same learning outcomes that drive the curriculum need to determine out-of-class activities.

Questions that arise on Drury's campus indicate the constant refinement of this general education program. As the uses of technology grow, how does the core curriculum address the implications of the resulting changes? How does the ever-increasing speed of communication alter teaching styles in the classroom? Are there styles of writing that are being forced by technology that need to be intentionally addressed in the classroom? Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, what content should shift in classroom materials? All of these questions and more continue to enhance discussions and course changes at Drury University. The challenges of offering, assessing, and improving an interdisciplinary core curriculum actually become strengths for Drury University because of the constant dialogue that results regarding student learning, the nature of knowledge, and the dissolution of disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

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Meeting Generation NeXt: Today's Postmodern College Student

Mark L. Taylor

Introduction

The traditionally aged college student, generation NeXt, is the product of a very different social reality than the members of the baby boom who predominate as college faculty and staff. Postmodern influences and sensibilities permeate the expectations of students and may be at odds with what schools intend to offer. This presentation overviews some characteristics of generation NeXt, their social genesis, and these postmodern times, with suggestions for helping generation NeXt be successful in postsecondary education.

Generations

Making generalizations about generations is a slippery prospect at best, especially about a group as diverse as generation NeXt. The concept of modal personality from sociology and anthropology has long been used to describe the central tendencies of the personality characteristics of a given group or population (Howard, 1996). As long as it can be remembered that there is great variation within any group, and if the modal tendencies are not held to rigidly, as stereotypes, some generalizations can help in understanding groups. This is especially true when the social impacts on characteristics are considered, and in comparing generational cohorts.

The description of generations has been popular in the academic and popular press, especially the description of the post-baby boom generations (Howe & Strauss, 1993, 2000; Levine & Cureton, 1998; Losyk, 1997; Lyotard, 1988; Raines, 1997; Sacks, 1996; Smith & Clurman, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Young, 2003). While the traits of earlier generational cohorts are described more or less consistently, there is much disagreement about the status of and prospects for today's traditionally aged students, even about a name for the group.

A brief review of the generations might help place today's students in context (Strauss & Howe, 1991). The earliest generation still represented in significant numbers on campuses is the silent generation. Born 1925 to 1944 and currently between fifty-nine and seventy-seven years old, these Americans were very influenced by the Great Depression and World War II. Also called "matures," they were socialized and still tend to value duty, discipline, delay of gratification, sacrifice, and conformity (Smith & Clurman, 1997). They tend to be comfortable in hierarchical authority structures and have a strong work ethic. Popularized as "the greatest generation" when combined with the GI generation before them, born 1901 to 1924 (Brokow, 1998), these citizens expected to work hard for what they had and not to squander resources. Many of their social conventions and values were more typical of premodern than modern times, especially the permeation of religion into social institutions and the emphasis on religious values and traditions over science in decision making. Though modernism, with its belief in reason, dates back two centuries (Sacks, 1996), the truly modern shift toward science and the belief in the promise of science and progress did not take significant cultural hold until World War II. Higher education was certainly less available for members of the silent generation than it is today, but opened significantly after World War II.

After World War II, the silents and the GI generation created the greatest economic expansion in the twentieth century and produced the baby boom. This postwar generation is generally demarcated from 1945 to 1965 (ages thirty-seven to fifty-seven) and makes up the majority of college faculty and staff. Boomers were and still are the "pig in the python," causing social institutions to grow to accommodate them, then to contract as a result of the decline in birthrates in 1965. From maternity wards, to public schools, to colleges, through the workforce, health care, and soon into the retirement industry, everyone makes way for boomers.

Truly children of a modern age, they articulated social and civil ideals and acted upon them in civil and women's rights and antipoverty initiatives. Scientific advancements in medicine, space travel, agriculture, electronics, and labor-saving consumer devices supported the modern belief in science as a positive tool for social progress that would eventually liberate all mankind from the bondage of toil, and science continued to usurp religion and traditional beliefs in decision making. Religion was certainly not abandoned, nor were churches closed, but the separation of church and state became more of a reality, and ideas like evolution took greater social hold. Modernism tends to place religion as one of the pieces of the social structure, but not necessarily the central hub. The school, with its focus on secular learning and science (as well as sports and child development), replaced the church as the center of social activity in many communities.

Baby boom children had all the advantages of a traditional family structure, and the *Leave It to Beaver*/ *Father Knows Best* family of working father, stay-at-home mother, and at least one child was the most common type, representing seventy-five of one hundred families (Raines, 1997). The postwar economic expansion helped make this possible, as did the relative affluence of a growing middle class. Dr. Benjamin Spock encouraged parents to spare the rod and nurture their children's creativity. Many children were raised in an atmosphere of optimism and economic and social growth by parents who did not know how to spend money on themselves. It is little wonder that boomers developed values different from earlier generations. Individuality, the importance of self-development, and entitlement (though tempered by some willingness to work for grades and rewards) became core values, while delaying gratification became less popular. This represented a basic turning away from the values their parents held dear; the same parents who were funding their quest for personal improvement.

This baby boom generation might be viewed as a transitional generation between the traditionalist premodern and modern values of earlier times and the postmodernist values of today. For good or ill, major social changes were wrought for and by the boomers. It should be noted that many of the social changes conventionally attributed to boomers were actually the result of efforts by members of earlier generational cohorts. Society became much more inclusive for minorities and women. Education, including higher education, came to be viewed as birthright. Many negative, putative, and borderline abusive parenting and school discipline methods lost favor. Rigid, patriarchal social and family structures were questioned and abandoned by many, along with the hegemony of religion. The well-publicized excesses of drugs, sex, and rock and roll of the 1960s and 1970s did take a toll, and society snapped back to Republicanism in the 1980s.

When the leading edge of the baby boom were old enough to start families of their own, many choose not to. In the "baby bust" of 1965 to 1979 the birthrate fell from the baby boom high of 25.3 per 1,000 to 14.6 per 1,000 (Strauss & Howe, 1991) and produced generation X. The freedoms of the 1960s and 1970s and boomers' motivation for personal improvement left less room for children in their lives and the lives of silent generation members who were taking advantage of the new social freedoms. Increases in the availability and reliability of birth control and abortion made parenting a true choice for sexually active adults for the first time in history. Members of generation X, now twenty-three to thirty-eight, were low-priority children of adults who believed that having a nice car was more important than having children (Raines, 1977). The revolutionary 1960s were followed by the disillusioned 1970s and the traumatic 1980s, so many of these young people came of age in difficult times, and many of their children felt like they were "late to the (boomers') party" (Strauss & Howe, 1991). They have been famously defined in both the academic and mainstream media as cynical, distrustful of authority, arrogant, naive, and materialistic (Levine & Cureton, 1998; Sacks, 1996; Tulgan, 1997). As generation Xers entered the workforce, they were described by boomer managers as disloyal, not appropriately deferential to authority, inattentive, uncommitted, and arrogant (Tulgan 1997). While these characteristics certainly would not apply to everyone in the generation X cohort, they have taken hold as a stereotype that many Xers are having to disprove and/or outgrow.

The "baby boom echo" or "baby boomlet" started in 1979, when the boomers finally decided to follow the biological imperative and produced generation NeXt, and proceeded until 1994. These young people, now eight to twenty-three years old, number 60 million strong, and are the single largest demographic in the United States (Howe & Strauss, 1993). These are our entering, traditionally college-aged students. There is not a clear consensus on their character. Some describe them as "the next great generation" (Howe & Strauss, 1993). Others believe that the continuing impact of postmodern influences means that they are more likely to look like a continuation of generation X than a cycling back to the tradition, duty, discipline, and delay of gratification that characterized the greatest generation (Sacks, 1996).

Postmodern Theory

Postmodernism was most famously defined by Jean-Francois Lyotard in 1979 (in French) as "incredulity towards metanarratives." Metanarratives are totalizing, all-encompassing (meta) stories (narratives) about the history, purpose, and goals of mankind that provide the foundation for the interpretation of information, the organization of knowledge, and the establishment of cultural practices. While premodern times relied on religion to provide these narratives, the modern era turned to science. Both viewed history as moving toward social enlightenment and emancipation, with knowledge eventually becoming complete. All would be known, either theologically or scientifically. While the modern era saw the scientific model becoming legitimized, postmodernism, according to Lyotard, is an age of fragmentation and pluralism, with no one model offering any predominate, shared metanarrative. There has been a widespread delegitimation of previous models and authorities; religion, science, political and economic power, and sources of "knowledge" (Anderson, 1990; Lyotard, 1988; Sacks, 1996).

Postmodernism arose as a reaction to the perceived limitations and failings of modernism and a questioning of its truths (Sacks, 1996). In his 1992 address to the World Economic Forum on "The End of the Modern Era," Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel said that modernism was an era in which there was a "cult of depersonalized objectivity" when "objective knowledge was amassed and technologically exploited" with "belief in automatic progress brokered by the scientific method" (Havel, 1992). The obvious economic exploitation of scientific knowledge, as opposed to its being used for the general good, combined with the inability of science to fulfill its promise. Space shuttles exploded; antibiotics quit working; pollution and abuse of natural resources followed most civilization;

and labor-saving devices did not give anyone more time. Reports of scientific advancements came to be viewed skeptically with the assumption that the information promoted someone's agenda, as opposed to objectively presenting facts (Sacks, 1996). Socially, the impact of multiculturalism (including immigration) and efforts to increase pluralism, mutual understanding, and respect increased awareness that there are other people following different models and doing perfectly well. Notions of the equal value and applicability of various models of viewing the world proved especially devastating to religions whose bread and butter is being the only path to some spiritual or everlasting goal. As postmodernism usurped modernism, premodern beliefs became anachronistic.

Postmodernism lacks a prevailing model, though some would say that consumerism is most prevalent (Anderson, 1990; Sacks, 1996). We understand ourselves as producers and consumers. Information is a tool for people to promote their products, and may actually be the product. Self-interest, as initially developed by boomers, may have come to maturity and replaced a larger spiritual or community good as a legitimate value model for personal choices (Sacks, 1996). One implication for education has been to come to view it as a "product" and students as "customers" (Tschohl, 1993).

Postmodern Generations

Generations X and NeXt are the product of these postmodern influences and the accompanying social changes. If boomers were defined by Jefferson Airplane's "feed your head," Nirvana's "here we are now, entertain us" might better describe later generations (Sacks, 1996). The most profound shift may have been in the structure of the family. As the family changed, so did socialization patterns, agents of socialization, and interpersonal bonding dynamics. Where 75 percent of families in the 1960s looked like the *Leave It to Beaver/ Father Knows Best* family of working father, stay-at-home mom, and at least one child, by 1997 only three in one hundred families fit that picture (Raines, 1997). That is the greatest change in the family since the Industrial Revolution, when fathers left the farm to work in industry. The great outmigration of mothers into the workforce and the escalation in divorce rates increased the prevalence of single-parent families, and led these children to have historically unique formative experiences, at least for the United States. The rise of day care made children consumers at a very early age, as well as subjecting them to as many parenting and supervision models as there were workers. With day-care staff among the least trained and lowest paid workers in our society, socialization for these children, when supervised at all, was uneven at best. Many were latchkey children, expected to fend for themselves after school from an early age, turning to television (which had become increasingly violent and sexual) for companionship and guidance. If boomer children were told "you can be whatever you want to be," these young people were told "be careful" (Raines, 1997).

Postmodern Education for Generation NeXt

The rise of postmodernism coincided with changes in higher education. Students changed academically as evidenced by declining test scores, reduced willingness to work for grades, increased expectations for entertainment in the classroom, and an almost knee-jerk distrust of authority. Educators, grounded in the scientific method of the modern era, were increasingly at a loss to engage postmodern students effectively and complained of expectations for good grades with little effort, expectations by students and administrators for grade inflation, lower academic standards, and lack of self-direction in learning (Levine & Cureton, 1998; Sacks, 1996).

Generation NeXt is a diverse, even fragmented, age cohort that is following generation X into college. Whether or not they follow generation X's famous tendencies, they certainly might be expected to continue to have a consumer mentality and to be adaptable, pragmatic, self-reliant, and technoliterate—characteristics also applied to generation X (Raines, 1997; Sacks, 1996). Today's incoming students are seen as substantially different than generation X by the influential Howe and Strauss, who describe them as close to parents, focused on grades, active in extracurricular and community activities, demanding of a secure and regulated environment, and respectful of social conventions and institutions (Young, 2003). Academic trends suggest that these traits are not being evidenced at many campuses across the country, especially at less elite institutions, and members of generation NeXt are certainly the least studious of modern cohorts (Higher Education Research Institute, 2002).

For educational delivery systems to be effective, especially with generation NeXt, they will need to recognize and operationalize a variety of influences. Much has been written about maximizing undergraduate learning (Austin, 1993; Chickering & Reiser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Academics tends to be rooted in the modern and based on science; science as a method for uncovering and demonstrating "truth" and science as a body of knowledge in many fields as developed through its methods. The relationship between instructors and students tends to follow traditional lines of authority and diminished consent as instructors establish agendas for both the content and process of student learning, whether they tell students what they need to know or attempt to follow Galileo's famous maxim to help students discover for themselves. The postmodern tendencies of students to reject both facts and authority might be in conflict with these basic premises of higher education. Few graduate programs in fields outside education address pedagogy in meaningful ways, and certainly don't prepare instructors to hold students' interest or provide the entertainment they expect (Sacks, 1996).

Suggestions

Basic guidelines for educating generation NeXt might include the following.

1. Establishing clear expectations, and communicating these expectations early and often. Since generation NeXt has been required to adapt to a variety of circumstances and environments, many without clear expectations, the goal might be to exploit their adaptability by giving them clear expectations to adapt to. Whether the expectations are for class attendance and timeliness or the quality of written work, good instructors, like good parents, will communicate and hold students to consistent behavioral expectations. Increasing consistency across the campus will also increase effectiveness, as will engaging students in the establishment of community standards and expectations.
2. Articulating all desired outcomes. If colleges are interested in developing personal, community, and citizenship competencies as well as academic competencies, these should be spelled out and quantified with codes of conduct and transcribing of community service activities.
3. Stressing the role of the scientific method in understanding, as well as the potential abuses of science and data. If science is to be viewed realistically as a set of tools for understanding, the limitations and need to critically examine data must be stressed, along with traditional education about the scientific method.
4. Avoiding pomposity and unnecessary displays of power or authority. The “whys” for everything from parking regulations to class assignments must be articulated nondefensively so as not to risk knee-jerk rejection.
5. Expanding the parameters for class projects from the traditional paper to other types of demonstrations of research and learning. Expanded choices might increase student ownership of the process and outcome.
6. Maintaining technological sophistication. Hard-wired youth have little patience for educational methods they see as outdated, such as unidirectional lecture to rows of passive listeners. It might be easy for these students to assume that an instructor who is not aware of modern technological trends might be equally unaware of current issues in their own field.
7. Teaching “up” Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). Generation NeXt is probably even less inspired by the expectation that they memorize and regurgitate unapplied knowledge-level factoids than earlier cohorts, and may actively rebel against them.
8. Providing real-life application. Any topic, class, or field that cannot demonstrate its immediate application to each student will be suspect. “You have to know this because it will be on the test” is guaranteed to discredit both the information and the instructor, as it tends to show there is no other use for the information.
9. Offering opportunities for out-of-class interpersonal involvement, from informal interaction with instructors during regular office hours to clubs and organizations, might help increase students’ connections to the campus, and so their learning and development.
10. Appreciating diverse viewpoints. Multicultural, paranormal/religious, and traditional (even racist and sexist) perspectives must be allowed air space in classrooms to allow for each to be dispassionately examined for accuracy, veracity, and utility. The knee-jerk “that’s just wrong” by some boomer instructors of discredited or politically incorrect opinions doesn’t promote this necessary analysis, which offers students tools to make their own evaluations in the future.
11. Increasing flexibility in course schedules, semesters, and flexibility in entry and exit. The old two-sixteen-week-semesters model has the power of decades of tradition and offers administrative convenience, but might not best meet the needs of all students who are juggling other responsibilities.
12. Moderating a customer-based service model. Some of the quality service initiatives have helped shift the perspective from faculty and staff convenience to student service (Tschohl, 1993), as the “learning-centered college” movement has help shift the focus from teaching to learning (O’Banion, 1999). If a student customer model is adopted, it should be stressed that no rational customer expects to “get something for nothing” and that the customer is not always right.

Conclusion

Generation NeXt is coming to campus with special expectations and needs, having been raised under unique conditions in these postmodern times. If they are to successfully matriculate and enter the workforce with sufficient intellectual and social skills, we of the boomer and other generational cohorts must appreciate these special influences and needs and reexamine the climate, processes, and content of higher education to maximize their chances for success.

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Providing Positive Institutional Climates for American Indian/Alaska Native Students

Joseph J. Saggio and Jim Dempsey

Introduction

Arguably the most at-risk group in higher education, American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/ANS) comprise 1.0 percent of the collegiate population according to 1998 figures from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). The NCES figures also indicate that AI/ANS comprise 1.0 percent of the national population. Thus, though they are small in actual numbers, these students are proportionately represented within the academy. This is especially important because in 1980 they comprised merely 0.7 percent of the college-going population, thus netting a 30 percent increase in their collegiate representation since that time. Clearly, AI/ANS are growing in numbers and representation within the academy and are therefore deserving of serious attention from institutions that seek an ethnically diverse student body.

A Brief History of American Indian College

American Indian College (AIC) was founded to serve this small, but important segment of the higher educational community and provides a positive institutional climate that helps AI/ANS to be successfully recruited and retained, and to persist to graduation. Specializing in serving AI/AN students for more than forty-five years, AIC is a small, denominational Bible college affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The college is located in Phoenix, Arizona, and serves more than two dozen tribes throughout the United States. AIC's mission, found on page 10 of its current catalog, indicates that "American Indian College exists to prepare Native Americans for a life of ministry, which in Scripture is synonymous with service." Currently the college has three academic programs that support its institutional mission:

- Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry¹
- Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education
- Associate of Arts in Business

The primary focus of AIC is training indigenous Christian ministers to serve Indian Assemblies of God churches. However, the secondary focus is providing school teachers and business people who might become active and supportive lay personnel within the Native communities, thus also strengthening the churches through their leadership and financial stewardship.

AIC is distinguished by the following three characteristics that give it a somewhat unusual status among institutions of higher learning:

- 68 percent of the student body is AI/AN.
- Twenty-six tribes are presently represented within the student body.
- AIC is the only regionally-accredited four-year Bible college for AI/ANS in the United States.

Because of its unique and focused mission, AIC has to strive to provide a positive institutional climate for all of its students, realizing that applicants often have opportunities to attend larger, more prestigious institutions. Accordingly, AIC recognizes that it is not enough to have a unique niche; students must be made aware of this institution and find it inviting and relevant to their educational needs.

Recruitment

The recruitment process is integral to any institution. It is especially so for AIC since many of its students come from small Native American communities and may be intimidated by the institutional climate of many higher educational institutions. Grounded data

in Saggio's (2000) qualitative study on academic persistence and institutional choice revealed that many students chose AIC because of

- Recruitment strategies
- Ethnicity of the students
- Small size of the college
- Student-teacher ratio

The recruitment strategies were cited because of the friendliness and personal contact made by the staff. Students receive phone calls throughout the admissions process and are given as much information as possible in order to help them successfully negotiate the process. Also, student recruiters are used during summer breaks when musical groups from the college go out and represent the school in reservation communities. The friendliness and enthusiasm of the student recruiters were also cited as being important in this process.

Public relations materials from the college reflect the additional priorities of the applicants, which include the ethnic makeup of the college, its small size, and the student-teacher ratio. Promotional materials and admissions personnel from AIC accentuate these positives so that students know that the college has strengths in those areas. These all contribute towards a positive institutional climate that is inviting to AI/AN applicants.

As part of the 2003 self-study report, the administration, faculty, and staff assessed their satisfaction with various offices on campus. The Office of Admissions received the highest score of any of the offices on campus, garnering a mean of 4.14 out of a possible 5.

Retention

AIC recognizes that, since AI/AN students are at a high risk for dropping out, appropriate intervention strategies need to be implemented to provide a positive institutional climate that will help them persist to degree completion and have a satisfactory and personally fulfilling educational experience. AIC has a relatively high retention rate for an institution serving a proportionately high level of AI/AN students. The 1997–2002 average freshman retention rate was 78.5 percent. Wells's (1997) self-reported survey showed a freshman retention rate of 46.7 percent for AI/AN students, a difference of 31.8 percent.

The college also has a high all-student retention rate. The five-year average (1997–2002) for all students was 76.4 percent, a respectable figure for an institution serving such a high percentage of minority students. Retention is addressed through the following means:

- Freshman year experience
- Retention task force
- Academic intervention strategies
- Validation
- Cultural sensitivity

☐ Freshman Year Experience

Two recent program revisions are noteworthy. The first is a complete reworking of the freshman orientation course. Input for the course revision was obtained through the retention task force and academic affairs committee as well as less formal feedback from faculty and staff that continued to bring to light areas in which AIC's students seemed lacking in basic knowledge and coping skills. What had previously been a one-semester three-credit-hour course became two three-credit-hour courses spread over an entire year, giving greater opportunity for practical orientation. The first semester now covers the introduction and study skills material usually associated with such courses, along with an introduction to personal financial management to help students avoid indebtedness. AIC's students also need to be warned about those things most likely to destroy their educational aspirations, and to this end a series of humorous class sessions is entitled "Ye Dragons Wot Feed Upon Th' Flesh O' Freshmen."

The second semester involves social orientation and deals more specifically with the dynamics of attending a culturally diverse, multi-tribal institution (more than twenty-six tribes as well as other ethnic groups). Relationships are a big part of the subject matter, as is maintaining a vital spiritual life. The college is considering ways to make both semesters more relevant to non-traditional students, who are more likely to be older, married or divorced, and living off campus. In the future, a separate section may be designed for non-traditional students.

Another innovation currently being revamped is AIC's Welcome Week, an initiation activity with a "warm, fuzzy" twist. In late fall 2002, AIC's new students were subjected to an informal, almost impromptu initiation day that bore an uncomfortable resemblance to Fear Factor. When student leadership evaluated the event, they concluded that it did not reflect what the college was about. An apology was made to the "victims," and planning began for an event that would truly convey AIC's values to incoming students.

The new Welcome Week was planned around the themes of *commitment*, *community*, and *communion*. It has been structured as follows.

- Day 1: **Commitment:** Freshmen are challenged to perform acts of servanthood and humility (but not humiliation).
- Day 2: **Community:** This second day involves team competitions that are conducive to cross-class bonding.
- Day 3: **Communion:** The morning of the third day culminates with a chapel service in which new students are officially welcomed into the community, having gone through the rites of passage on the previous two days. This week is commemorated by a gift of a pin to all participating students. AIC hopes that this will become a meaningful campus tradition with a positive effect on both retention and alumni relations.

☐ Retention Task Force

The retention task force meets at least twice a semester and is composed of an interdisciplinary group representing various constituencies within the college, including academic affairs, student affairs, admissions, financial aid, and student representation. The retention task force deals with retention concerns and monitors retention by seeking input from these various constituencies. Data from the College Student Inventory[®] from Noel-Levitz is used to identify freshman students who may be prone to dropping out. The input from the various constituencies is helpful because each area has an influence on the institutional climate and affects the student's experience at the college. The aggregate total of experience included within the retention task force is invaluable in helping campus leadership monitor retention and attrition.

AIC also has several intervention strategies that it uses to help monitor retention. First, academic advising is carried out within the academic departments, and the departmental chairs oversee most of the academic advising. AIC also gives midterm grades that serve as progress reports to the students, the department chairs, and the academic dean. Because AIC is a small institution, this works well and helps instructors stay informed about how their respective students are doing.

Students on academic probation are placed in the success in college class, where they are closely monitored during their probationary period. Students on academic warning may also be placed in the class if directed by the academic dean.

Finally, the college's learning resource department (LRD) provides remedial coursework for students whose entry placement test scores indicate a need. Small courses designed to improve basic college skills coupled with tutoring help students increase their likelihood of earning degrees. A recent five-year assessment of the LRD program showed that 47 percent of those who took one or more LRD courses graduated with either A.A. or B.A. degrees.

☐ Academic Intervention Strategies

The college uses a system of intervention strategies to help maintain a high retention rate. Although the academic dean has campus-wide oversight of retention, faculty and staff members carry out many of the actual intervention strategies. The academic intervention strategies are

- Academic alert notices for low attendance and grades
- Midterm grades sent to students, respective department chairs, and academic dean
- Academic advising done by departmental chairs
- Assignment to success in college class for students on academic probation
- Academic warning status for those who are in danger of probation if their grades aren't raised.
- Remedial coursework and tutoring for students needing additional help in their coursework from the learning resource department

☐ Validation

Validation is the process by which students are affirmed in their abilities and encouraged to succeed at the highest level possible (Rendón, 1994). Students are validated through both in-class and out-of-class experiences. For example,

- Instructors learn the student's name quickly and use it. (small class sizes help).
- Instructors are personable and approachable.
- Instructors provide helpful feedback in order to help students succeed.
- Instructors utilize a learning style that is student-centered (hands-on and experiential).
- Instructors praise students for good work (both individually and corporately).

AIC believes that validation within the classroom is very important. However, in-class experiences should be coupled with out-of-class validation experiences. AIC faculty and staff

- Visit with students during lunch time on campus
- Attend special dinner functions, sporting events, and social occasions that bring the entire campus community together
- Invite students to their homes
- Schedule private conferences (including mentoring) with students on campus or in more informal settings off campus

☐ Cultural Sensitivity

Closely tied to validation is the need for cultural sensitivity. Since many AIC students chose the college because of its demographic makeup, it is of paramount importance for faculty and staff to be culturally sensitive to the unique needs of AI/AN students. Because the college is composed of more than twenty-six distinct tribal groups, becoming a specialist in a particular tribe's cultural orientation is less important than having a general understanding of the more common hallmarks of AI/AN students. AIC endeavors to provide a positive institutional climate conducive to recruitment, retention, and graduation of AI/AN students through the following actions designed to promote cultural sensitivity.

- Appropriate involvement of family members in discussions about enrolling at AIC, as well as letting family members know they can call upon the college for assistance
- Face-to-face and direct telephone contact with the student when recruiting rather than emphasis on printed recruiting materials and Web sites
- AI/AN personnel in key positions to serve as role models and provide a more culturally friendly institutional climate
- Instructional practices that favor hands-on practical learning rather than highly theoretical, abstract approaches
- Allowing students to make extended trips home for family emergencies
- Hiring faculty who are student-oriented rather than research-oriented
- Ministry outreach activities that favor both urban and rural Native communities
- Inclusion of family members of students in AIC community events when possible
- Frequent use of Native Christian leaders in chapel and graduation services

These practices have helped create a positive institutional climate for AIC students that makes them more likely to persist toward degree completion. Even more importantly, they provide a positive educational experience.

Graduation Rates

AI/ANs have the lowest graduation rates of any ethnic minority.² Consequently, AIC works especially hard to provide an institutional climate that will help students have a high graduation rate. AIC's graduation rate is respectable when compared with other institutions serving primarily AI/AN students.

Table 1 shows the three most recently available (2000) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) graduation rates for four-year degree-granting institutions in which an AI/AN cohort makes up the majority of students. Four of these institutions are part of the American Indian Higher Educational Consortium (AIHEC), a consortium of tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) institutions that serve a predominately Native American population. AIC is the only non-AIHEC member in this grouping. Some data were not reported and are shown as *** in the table.

Table 1

Most recently available through IPEDS (2000) cohort graduation rates for 1997-1998, 1998-1999, and 1999-2000 of bachelor's degree granting institutions with a majority of AI/AN students in its enrollment.

Institution	Graduation Rate			Ranking		
	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
1. Salish Kootenai (Pablo, Montana)	35	66.7	37.4	1(tie)	1	1
2. American Indian College (Phoenix, Arizona)	35	32	34.6	1(tie)	2	2
3. Haskell Indian Nations U. (Lawrence, Kansas)	7.4	***	***	3	5	4
4. Oglala Lakota College (Kyle, South Dakota)	***	22.7	***	5	3	5
5. Sinte Gleska University (Rosebud, South Dakota)	7	2.3	15	4	4	3

***Data omitted

This table shows that AIC's graduation rate is competitive with other four-year institutions that have 50 percent or more AI/AN students. AIC's graduation rate is comparable with national figures of 38 percent for six-year graduation rates of AI/AN students at NCAA Division I schools (Harvey, 2002).³ Although AIC's graduation rate is not extraordinarily high for AI/AN students in general, it is respectable, especially considering that AIC admits a large percentage of at-risk students. For example, Table 2 shows that AIC's students score below both state and national mean scores for AI/ANs on the American College Test (ACT).

Table 2

**Comparison of Recent Mean Composite ACT Scores
for AI/AN Students at the National, State (Arizona), and Local Level (AIC)**

National (1996)	Arizona (1996)	AIC (Fall '95-Spring '97):
18.8	17.5	15.1

Sources: American College Testing Program; Arizona Board of Regents, Research Division; American Indian College, Office of the Registrar

Notes: From the *Chronicle of Higher Education* September 2, 1996 Vol. XLIII No. 1 Almanac Issue (p. 14); Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999

All in all, AIC strives to have the highest possible graduation rate and works hard to utilize strong retention principles to help the college achieve a respectable graduation rate. The evidence seems to show that the positive institutional climate is instrumental in helping students fulfill their educational aspirations and complete their courses of study.

At AIC, the graduation ceremony combines aspects of traditional commencement exercises and emblems of the student's tribal background. For example, opening and closing prayers are often given in both English and a tribal language. Students sometimes wear traditional tribal apparel underneath their graduation gowns. Family members may present traditional tribal gifts to graduates. Native Christian leaders are often selected to give the address in order to reinforce the mission of the college as well as salute students' achievements. Each student's brief biography is given, and every student is individually prayed for and commissioned for service. Although the college is small and serves only about eighty students, graduation services often have an attendance of 400 to 600, with large numbers of family members, alumni, and others in attendance.

Conclusion

AIC works hard to be a college with a positive institutional climate that is conducive to recruitment, retention, and graduation of AI/AN students. Although the college is very small, it successfully treats students as individuals with diverse ethnic backgrounds and helps them navigate the world of higher education, while also giving them a culturally affirming experience.

Notes

- ¹ This degree program fulfills the educational requirements for ministerial credentials with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and is designed to increase the level of indigenous leadership within Native American churches.
- ² See, for example, the study conducted by Benjamin, Chambers, and Reiterman (1993). Hoover and Jacobs (1992) point out that 75 percent of all AI/AN students depart college before completing a four-year degree. This departure rate is twice the national average.
- ³ In the Minorities in Higher Education 2001–2002 report, Harvey (2002) cites a 2000 study by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) that found that 38 percent of AI/ANs who entered as first-time, full-time freshmen were able to graduate from NCAA Division I institutions within six years. This was a 1 percent drop from the previous year.

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Utilizing Quality Reviews to Reengineer the Delivery of Student Services

Cynthia D. Armster, Charles Guengerich, and Deidra J. Lewis

Rarely in the history of the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) have the “planets been aligned” in our favor! However, over the past three years this has indeed been the case, and the City Colleges have been able to take bold steps to transform the manner in which business is done. Utilizing a process of quality reviews, the City Colleges has recommitted itself to return to its core mission of providing quality instruction and developing Chicago’s workforce to meet the demands of the twenty-first century.

Background

Composed of seven separately accredited colleges, five technical centers, and two skills training centers strategically located throughout the city of Chicago, the City Colleges of Chicago is the largest urban comprehensive community college system in the nation. With an enrollment of over 160,000, the City Colleges is also the largest institution of higher learning in the state of Illinois, and a gateway to higher education for more than **65 percent** of the state’s minority population.

The City Colleges has the following instructional areas to meet the needs of the Chicagoland area: liberal arts and sciences, adult education, workforce development, and continuing education. Almost 40 percent of students are enrolled in the adult education program, thus making the City Colleges the state’s largest provider of adult education.

In 1998, under the leadership of the newly appointed chancellor, the City Colleges of Chicago began working tirelessly to upgrade and align standards across the district to offer students an improved chance to matriculate between the colleges, as well as to four-year institutions upon completion of their two-year studies. Numerous articulation and dual admissions agreements have been signed to facilitate the smooth transfer of CCC’s graduates. Consequently, **70 percent** of CCC’s liberal arts graduates now transfer to four-year institutions to pursue additional education.

In 2000 a new chairman was appointed to serve on the board of trustees for the City Colleges of Chicago. A former community college student and a successful businessman in financial management, the chairman has become a dedicated advocate of the mission of the City Colleges to provide Chicago’s diverse populations with educational opportunities and access. The chairman championed the cause for increased accountability in providing quality instruction and services to CCC’s students, leading to the advent of quality reviews of instructional and educational services within the City Colleges of Chicago.

Quality Review Process

A poll of CCC’s seven presidents was conducted to identify instructional and service areas within their colleges upon which to focus. The initial areas identified for the quality review process included business, computer information systems, counseling, distance learning, and library/resource centers. The focus of this paper will be on the counseling quality review, which paved the way to transform the delivery of student services within the City Colleges of Chicago.

In summer 2001 quality review committees were formed, with faculty, staff, students, and administrators from across the district. Instruments were constructed to assess the current manner in which service was being rendered to students. Completed by counseling departments at all seven colleges, the assessment revealed the need for increased office coverage during peak times when students were in need of support services. Additionally, an analysis of the data revealed gross duplication of support services throughout the colleges across job categories.

Essentially, when the City Colleges separated from the Chicago Public Schools in the early 1960s, the system retained the counseling and library services model based on a nine-month contract and thirty-hour workweek. Over the years, the City Colleges expanded their mission and became more comprehensive, but they did not convert to a model where students across all educational programs could access support services year round vs. services being rendered primarily to students in credit programs. Therefore, over the years additional positions had been developed and personnel hired to perform functions similar to those performed by counselors.

Action Plan

1. In March 2002 the board of trustees voted to eliminate the job category of faculty counselor, affecting approximately nineteen full-time counselors.
2. The position of registration specialist was converted to that of college advisor, with upgraded educational requirements and job responsibilities. The position was advertised in April with the intention of hiring personnel with master's degrees to start in May. The advisors would provide support services to all City Colleges students, irrespective of the instructional program in which they were enrolled.
3. Staff in job categories mirroring the college advisor position were converted to college advisors over a four-month period.
4. Specialized training was given to newly hired or converted college advisors to prepare them to render comprehensive advising to City Colleges students. The idea was to connect students across all CCC programs and guide them on the path to successful certificate or degree program completion.
5. Colleges established student success centers to provide one-stop delivery of student services, including admissions, assessment, registration, orientation, education/career planning, and academic advising.
6. Each college partnered with community-based organizations to establish service linkage agreements to provide personal counseling to students either identified as needing it or requesting referral. Additionally, partners conduct personal development workshops at the colleges to increase students' awareness of personal and community issues.
7. Fall 2003 is the target to establish the Faculty Academic Advising Institute to provide intensive and substantive advising training to faculty and instructors. The goal is to encourage quality advising to facilitate the smooth matriculation of students across programs within the City Colleges.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Increased matriculation and retention of CCC students between CCC programs
- Increased completion rate of CCC students in certificate and degree programs
- Increased transfer rate of CCC graduates to four-year institutions
- Increase job placement rate of career programs graduates

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Utilizing Standardized Assessments In Retention Planning and Quality Improvement By Faculty and Student Development

Kim Hayworth

Background

Starting a formalized quality improvement program is a daunting task for any size institution. Spring Arbor University (SAU), like many institutions, was faced with poor freshman to sophomore retention and a plateau graduation rate. Continual quality improvement within higher education is the responsibility of everyone on campus but often does not fall on the shoulders of one person. On the SAU campus, the director of retention has been charged with addressing key quality issues for the campus with the belief that by enhancing the total student experience, the school would improve its retention and graduation rates. At some institutions this could be the start of a turf war. SAU is unique in that it has developed a spirit of collaboration on to issues of quality improvement, no matter what area is being reviewed. SAU looks specifically at student opinions and expectations and works cooperatively across departmental lines to respond accordingly.

How We Got Started

In the early 1990s SAU's freshman to sophomore retention was 69 percent. Losing 30 percent of each entering class was a source of frustration for the campus. Admissions would work hard to bring in a new crop of freshmen, only to see one-third of the students choose not to return for their sophomore year. This loss of enrollment was devastating to the university's fiscal health and institutional morale.

In order to address the retention problem, SAU joined the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) Quality/Retention Project. The goal of the project was to look at retention and issues of quality individually and collectively within the Christian College sector. The study also created benchmarks against which CCCU institutions could measure themselves. Again, cooperation was paramount, and institutions that were making strides through creative and innovative programs shared their approaches to key retention and quality issues.

Data Collection

☐ Overall Student Satisfaction/Expectations

With plenty of anecdotal information but no real baseline data, the CCCU project introduced SAU to its principal instrument for collecting data, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). The SSI measures students' satisfaction with and level of importance of fourteen college experiences, including academic advising effectiveness, campus climate, campus life, campus support services, concern for the individual, instructional effectiveness, recruitment and financial aid effectiveness, registration effectiveness, responsiveness to diverse populations, safety and security, service excellence, and student centeredness.

Since 1995 SAU has administered the SSI four times. The results have been reviewed by the retention committee and the president and cabinet members, and they have been disseminated to department heads and university communications and the campus newspaper for on-campus and alumni publications. The data serve as a foundation for all retention and customer service programming and have been instrumental in budget allocations, staffing new positions, and overall institutional effectiveness. During the presentation a brief description of programs created to address deficiencies in instructional effectiveness, safety and security, academic advising effectiveness, recruitment, and registration effectiveness will be shared.

☐ **Assessing Freshman Needs**

Since the greatest percentages of students were leaving during or after their freshman year, it was apparent that greater attention needed to be focused on underclassmen. SAU has had a freshman year experience course, CORE 100, for almost twenty years, but the course lacked a student retention emphasis normally found in newer FYE courses. This is where the College Student Inventory (CSI) has been valuable. Also developed by Noel-Levitz, the CSI identifies students' self-reported needs, attitudes, motivational patterns, resources, coping mechanisms, and receptivity to intervention.

The CSI gives SAU a preview of the incoming freshman class. By administering the CSI during spring and summer registration days the results are available in early August to be reviewed by student development and CORE 100 instructors. Before freshmen even step onto the SAU campus for fall orientation, pinpointed preparations are made to meet their overall expectations as well as individual student needs. The CSI is a powerful tool that allows SAU to become aware of, prepare for, and respond to specific issues of the most at-risk freshman entering each fall. The CSI identifies not only the most at-risk individuals but also their reasons for being retention risks. The presentation will outline how SAU uses the CSI in CORE 100 and to make referrals to career services, counseling, the learning center, and student leadership.

☐ **Assessing Faculty and Administrators**

In fall 2001, SAU administered the Institutional Priorities Survey (IPS) in conjunction with the CCCU's Comprehensive Assessment Project. The IPS, another Noel-Levitz instrument, contains questions that parallel the SSI. The IPS assisted SAU in assessing the priority that faculty and top administrators believe our institution should place on the same range of student experiences that the SSI measures. Through the SSI and IPS, SAU has been able to compare importance and agreement/satisfaction scores for each segment of our campus.

Outcomes

This presentation will not report the outcomes typically shared at a Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting; it will tell how student development has been involved with collecting data, assessment, and the impact on quality. The desire to improve retention of the former vice president of student development, Everett Piper, brought about the creation of the director of retention position in 1994. This position brought attention to the need to look at students as customers or consumers. In most cases, students are well aware of what they want from their college experience. It became apparent to SAU that it needed this information formalized so that officials could become aware of institutional weaknesses and strengths in order to further promote areas of excellence and address opportunities for improvement.

Since 1994, SAU has improved its five-year freshman-to-sophomore retention rate average from 69 percent to 80 percent, and graduation rates have climbed 12 percent. In addition to increased retention and graduation percentages, the fall 2001 SSI indicates that SAU students are as satisfied as (three areas) or significantly more satisfied than (eleven areas) other CCCU students and students at other four-year private institutions. This is a dramatic improvement over the first time the SSI was administered. In 1997, SAU students were significantly more dissatisfied than other CCCU students when it came to instructional effectiveness and were only significantly more satisfied in two areas out of thirteen. Collaboration on assessment, course development, improved student services, and a strong relationship between academic affairs and student development played a part in SAU's successes in retention and quality improvement.

Why You Should Attend

The success SAU has experienced over the last decade can be replicated on almost any college or university campus. The Noel-Levitz instruments are reliable and can be used on large and small campuses to assess student expectations and satisfaction to benefit student learning inside and outside the classroom. Reduced attrition, improved graduation rates, and overall student satisfaction has benefited the entire campus by contributing to the institutions enrollment growth, fiscal stability, creation of new positions, and institutional pride.

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A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement

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